Chancellor's College success coach initiative: A formative program evaluation of the Virginia Community College system's initiative from the success coaches' perspective

Marcia C. Strange

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CHANCELLOR'S COLLEGE SUCCESS COACH INITIATIVE:
A FORMATIVE PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY
COLLEGE SYSTEM'S INITIATIVE FROM THE SUCCESS COACHES'
PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Marcia C. Strange
April 3, 2015
CHANCELLOR’S COLLEGE SUCCESS COACH INITIATIVE:
A FORMATIVE PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY
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Approved April 3, 2015 by

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Dedication

Crossing the threshold culminating this process is not on achieved in a solitary state, but rather by a collaborative and supportive network of many. First and foremost, it is through Him that I live, and move, and have my being, and without Him I am nothing but a vapor. I dedicate this work to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

and

To my beloved husband, Kevin, and our three gifts from heaven, Kevin II., Madisyn, and Cameron, I appreciate your ongoing sacrifices, patience, understanding, words of encouragement, and prayers. I look forward to redeeming the time.
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providing me with your support to bring it to completion.

Moreover, the Success Coaches who cannot be named, but are trailblazers in the
emerging field of academic coaching in the rural community college setting. I am
indebted to your sacrifices and your willingness to share your stories. Like you, I too see
great value in your position and the initiative as you reach and touch the lives of URPs.
It is my hope the narrative of your story will provide the needed space for program
retooling resulting in increased student outcomes.
Finally, as the field of research pertaining to community colleges, specifically rural community colleges and underrepresented populations of students is thin as well as academic coaching in the community college sector is scant. It is my hope that this study will add to the emerging conversations and research. Education is a key that unlocks the door for personal and professional advancement. Through conversation as well as commitment I believe we can unearth the needed tools through academic coaching to scaffold students, specifically URPs to degree attainment. Education is a gift that everyone deserves to possess!
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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this qualitative formative program evaluation study was to obtain the
Success Coaches’ perspective regarding the Virginia Community College System’s
(VCCS) Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative (CCSCI) and to identify how the
coaches achieved the initiative’s goals, what elements they perceived promoted student
success, and how these elements aligned with emerging academic coaching literature.
Data were collected using interviews, observation, and document analysis. The study
used a change model (Kotter & Cohen, 2002) and academic coaching literature
(Robinson & Gahagan, 2010) to guide data collection. Success Coaches were used as an
intervention to promote underrepresented populations of students (URP) success at the
VCCS’s smallest rural community colleges. Each campus hired two full-time restricted
coaches to share a caseload of 200 students. Student eligibility was based on meeting one
of three criteria: first-generation student, Pell recipient, or minority status and had
completed 14 or fewer college credits. Findings indicated Success Coaches sought to
achieve program goals by following the job description which entailed assisting students
with developing an individualized academic plan, applying for financial aid, identifying
academic needs resulting in linking to academic resources, visiting student development
course classes, regularly communicating with students individually and/or in groups, and
communicating with faculty along with student services personnel. In addition to
employing the elements of their job description, coaches also indicated visiting high schools, linking students to non-academic resources, and infusing academic advising. Supports identified by the coaches in helping to fulfill their job responsibilities included collaboration with faculty and student service personnel, other Success Coach(es), location on campus, their supervisor, the emerging VCCS communication, connecting with high school Career Coaches, and their institutional culture. Challenges coaches faced included a lack of communication and direction from the VCCS resulting in role confusion, along with establishing their student caseload, and the grant’s budgetary restrictions. Elements the coaches perceived supported student success that aligned with their job description were: creating academic plans for students, providing assistance with the financial aid application process, SAILS, linking students with tutoring resources, collaborating with faculty and student services personnel, providing workshops/activities, and building rapport with students in the program. The findings that were not a component of the coaches’ job description they perceived to support student success were linking students to non-academic resources, faculty-student relations, visiting the high schools, and academic advising. Elements reported by the Success Coaches that aligned with academic coaching included working with students to build their academic plan, linking to tutoring supports, building rapport, following up on early alerts posted on SAILS, and conducting workshops/activities. Coaches also promoted student success using supports that are well-documented in the literature for contributing to student success, but that move beyond the definitions of academic coaching (e.g., assisting with financial aid, collaborating with faculty and student services personnel, non-academic resources, visiting the high schools, faculty-student relations). Of note, the coaches
indicated spending time conducting academic advising with students, a function not
included in their job description and one that runs counter to the academic coaching
literature. This research concluded a gap existed between the change model (Kotter &
Cohen, 2002) and the implementation of the CCSCI program at the participating
institutions. As a result, the study revealed the process of the Success Coaches fulfilling
their job description was weakened due to lack of communication, lack of direction,
resulting in role confusion as well as lack of time and resources provided. Implications
for practice are the Chancellor/ Central Office to continue and complete the remaining
stages of the change process. Areas of practice for campus leaders are the coach’s
location, providing coaches professional development regarding FAFSA regulations, and
clearly communicating the CCSCI to the campus community. Implications for practice
for Success Coaches are increase faculty collaboration pertaining to programming,
integration of campus coaching programs to develop targeted student workshops, and
coaches developing a non-academic resource link for students. Areas of practice for
faculty are increase SAILS usage (flags and kudos) and timely notifying coaches of
curriculum changes.
The last implication for practice is for students to utilize and manage an academic planner, maintain a reflection journal, and provide Success Coaches with program feedback. Future research recommendations include program evaluation of all VCCS coaching programs, summative program evaluation of the CCSCI at the end of the second funding cycle, longitudinal study of Success Coaches employing the coaching conversation map, longitudinal study of students who received high school coaching and Success Coaching, and a comprehensive study of the CCSCI.

*Keywords:* Success Coach, academic coaching, goal setting, self-assessment, reflection, academic advising

MARCIA CLAYTOR STRANGE

EDUCATIONAL POLICY, PLANNING, AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA
CHANCELLOR'S COLLEGE SUCCESS COACH INITIATIVE:
A FORMATIVE PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM'S INITIATIVE FROM THE SUCCESS COACHES' PERSPECTIVE
Chapter 1: Introduction

“No institution in American education plays a more difficult role than the community college” (Cohen & Brawer, 1996, p. 440).

Since their inception, community colleges have been the “gateway” into the postsecondary educational pipeline for many underrepresented populations (URP) of students (Dowd, 2007, p. 407). The founding of these colleges transformed the higher education landscape (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Often touted as “the real workhorses of our nation’s post-secondary system” (Rothkopf, 2009, para. 14) due to their enrollment of almost half of America’s undergraduate students, their role is vital in buttressing America’s global competitiveness (Russell, 2011) and increasing international rankings in degree attainment (Achieving The Dream, 2013a). As a result of the pivotal role they play in providing access to a college education and their low cost, community colleges are being called upon to increase their efficiencies and to produce more degrees by 2020 (Kotamraju & Blackman, 2011). In order to respond to this call, community colleges can no longer rely on a “culture of anecdote” (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005, p. 6) by sharing inspiring stories, but must now develop a “culture of evidence” (McClenney, 2009, p. 20) driven by data. It is now imperative to know more about why students succeed, or do not, and what institutions can do to improve student success.

The underpinnings of postsecondary research regarding student persistence, student engagement, and student completion emerged during the early 1970s (Astin, 1984; Pace, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Summers, 2002; Tinto, 1975, 1982, 1993), and this research helps inform current practices for community college student success. The seminal research of Tinto (1975) first outlined the connection between levels of student involvement and student success, as measured by persistence and
college completion. Currently, Tinto’s model of Student Departure is one of the most popular, widely recognized, and tested frameworks utilized when examining higher education student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Summers, 2002). Tinto (1975, 1993) posited links between a students’ degree of persistence and the degree of institutional academic and social system integration. Variables that correlated to academic and social integration included a students’ background, commitments to collegial study, and interactions with campus members (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993).

Institutional commitment was prompted knowing that higher levels of integration increased the probability of student persistence (Reason, 2003; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Institutional oriented commitments are displayed through advising, academic support programs, student services programs, and faculty support of students (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Of importance in Tinto’s (1993) model is the fact that both student and institution alike maintain a role in the departure process.

With this background research in mind, Tinto and Pusser (2006) recently created an institutional model of action to show how colleges can assist students upon campus arrival. The model addresses the institution’s ability to manage their institutional commitment by way of support, involvement, and feedback. Additionally the action model provides a template that colleges can use to promote student persistence (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). The focus of this action model was to assist the underrepresented student populations (URP), specifically those from low-income backgrounds, but it was designed within a four-year institutional context. What remains unknown is the model’s
applicability to URP within the community college sector, specifically in rural community colleges.

Although research examining students' higher educational experiences, student persistence, and completion is voluminous and spans over three decades, the vast amount is focused on non-minority, traditionally-aged students (18-22), attending a four-year institution full-time, and residing on campus. On the one hand, based on this historic research, we know that engagement helps support persistence. On the other hand, we do not know the mediating influence of underserved students attending a community college on levels of engagement or persistence. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research regarding the community college sector and its underrepresented students' educational experiences and student persistence to degree completion rates.

Although URP access to higher education has increased, specifically within the community college sector, research on increasing URP student outcomes has not kept pace (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Pascarella, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Due to the paucity of research, community colleges confront challenging questions, such as "How is community college student engagement promoted?" or "What best practices promote community college student success?" Simultaneously, two-year colleges face pressures to improve completion rates (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Rosenbaum, Redline, & Stephan, 2007; Obama, 2009a, b). Understandably, given the links between "education and economic opportunity" (Bailey, Jacobs, Jenkins & Leinbach, 2003, p. 1) for students and the benefits of higher degree attainment levels raising U.S. global "economic competitiveness" (Russell, 2011, p. 2), it is critical to understand better how the community college sector is addressing the challenge of increasing student
engagement and thereby completion rates. Further, are community colleges addressing the rural segment with the same broad stroke applied to students attending urban or suburban counterparts?

Since the beginning of the 21st century, public demand for increased institutional accountability has resulted in student engagement situated as an organizing construct to address improving student persistence and student completion (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Eddy, 2012; Kuh, 2009). Two critical elements of student engagement are student and institutional behavior (Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008). A student's behavior is measured by amount of time dedicated to studying and engagement with educational activities, whereas institutional behavior is grounded by actions taken to connect with students by way of dedicated resources, activities, curriculum, and campus support systems (Kinzie et al., 2008; Krause, 2005; Kuh, 2009; McClenney, 2004).

Consequently, student engagement and student completion are at the forefront of American higher education conversations in response to the pervasive public demand of timely degree completion (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2010). In fact, “[f]ewer than one-third of degree-seeking, full-time freshmen in public four-year institutions graduate in four years” (SREB, 2010, p. 1). Moreover, the degree completion timeframe for such institutions is minimally six years, of which barely 50% achieve (SREB, 2010), whereas in the community college sector, completion rates are substantially lower with approximately 35% obtaining an associate degree or certificate within six years (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Lincoln, 2009; Kotamraju & Blackman, 2011; Rosenbaum et al., 2007). Educating nearly half of incoming undergraduate students (Lincoln, 2009;
Nitecki, 2011), community colleges are a vital link “within the U.S. educational and workforce development landscape” (Kotamraju & Blackman, 2011, p. 203). Thus, the research setting for this study was focused on the two-year college sector.

One faction of the two-year sector feeling particularly pressured for responding to the call for increased student persistence to degree attainment rates are rural community colleges. The Carnegie classification system did not permit community college institutional types to be disaggregated until recently (Eddy, 2007; Hardy & Katsinas, 2007). Since its restructuring, the new classification revealed rural community colleges consist of “64 percent of all two-year institutions” (Rural Community College Alliance [RCCA], 2012, para. 1) “and educate[s] one-third of all community college students [annually]” (Eddy, 2007, p.1). Due to their substantial presence in the sector and continual fast-paced growth, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) acknowledged the essential role of rural community colleges in attaining President Obama’s 2020 targeted national college graduation rate by partnering with the Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA) and establishing “Rural Community College Day” (White, 2010, para. 2). The President’s meeting with the RCCA provided the platform for rural community college leaders’ voices to be heard and promoted targeted discussion regarding challenges and opportunities experienced (White, 2010). Nevertheless, despite rural community colleges rise in the national spotlight, promising practices promoting persistence to degree attainment for underrepresented student populations are needed, as research on successful best practices has not disaggregated what works best for students based on institutional context.
To this end, community colleges are increasingly creating programming to help bolster persistence and completion rates (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Green, 2006). Within the scope of implementing new programming, it is essential for community colleges to view it through a change theory lens as programs are mere policies being employed at the institutional level (Fowler, 2009). Since new programs augment the current institutional structure, adherence to essential sequential implementation steps are needed to promote successful organizational outcomes (Kotter & Cohen, 2002) and is used as such for the purposes of this study. As community colleges program planning is developed, particular consideration is given to URP of students as they are still not meeting parity in educational outcomes of persistence and degree completion relative to their advantaged peers (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Green, 2006). Underrepresented populations (URP) of students are students who are “low-income, first-generation, or of a minority ethnicity or race” (Virginia Community College System [VCCS], 2012a, p.2). Based on the literature, Virginia Community College System definition for URP is interchangeable with the term underserved students (Bragg, Kim, & Barnett, 2006; Green, 2006) and is used as such for the purposes of this study.

In 2012, the VCCS instituted a new program titled Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative (CCSCI) at nine of the state’s rural community colleges. Inputs for the initiative included 200 identified students per participating institution for a target population of 1800 students. Students selected for inclusion in this special program were considered underserved and were at the beginning of their program of study (e.g., they had completed 14 or fewer credit hours) (VCCS, 2012a). In this study, I focused on this
program and conducted a formative evaluation. Moreover, in this study the CCSCI was viewed as an intentional institutional behavior that communicated the VCCSs commitment to promote student engagement. The actions taken targeted a student population at-risk, dedicated institutional resources, and established a devoted campus support system through Success Coach’s. The remainder of this chapter provides a detailed roadmap that explains the context of the problem, defines the purpose of the study, lists research questions, and describes the significance of the study. The chapter concludes by delineating key terms and summarizing the chapter.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, community colleges have maintained an open-door policy and low-tuition rates (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Dowd, 2007). As result, access to the educational pipeline expanded enrollment of many minorities, first-generation, and low-income students (Bailey et al., 2003; Engle & Tinto, 2008). Once relegated as onlookers, these underserved students achieved admission into college and began their pursuit of the American dream, receiving a college education and a good job (Beach, 2010; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Murray, 1989). Yet, despite increased community college access and enrollment, a gap between admission and degree attainment for underserved students compared to their advantaged peers has remained (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Russell, 2011). Burton Clark (1960) referred to this leak in the educational pipeline as the “cooling out” (p. 569) effect in which students entered the community college with aspirational goals, but shifted these aspirations to lower level achievements or dropped out along the way to degree completion. As a result, the compelling issue advocated among government officials,
accrediting agencies, educators, and researchers has shifted from student access to degree completion (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Bailey et al., 2003; McClenney, 2009; Russell, 2011).

As the focus has shifted from the educational pipeline entrance to the exit point, this lack of degree attainment is not only impacting America's global ranking for degree attainment, but also America's middle skills job market (Achieve, 2012; Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Russell, 2011). Within the workforce, a middle skills position requires education beyond a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree (Achieve, 2012). Educational goals meeting this requirement include an "associate degree, postsecondary certificate, [or an] apprenticeship (Achieve, 2012, p. 2). With community colleges positioned to address impending middle skill workforce needs to stave off potential outsourcing, it is crucial to determine how to increase URP student outcomes, specifically in rural community colleges in which these outcomes are elusive (Eddy, 2012; Lincoln, 2009).

Consequently, given the importance of increasing student outcome, the lack of research regarding the community college sector and its underserved student population (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) has spurred numerous federal and state initiatives examining student engagement and student outcomes (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Joch, 2009; McClenney, 2007, 2009; McClenney, McClenney, & Peterson, 2007). Culling research leading to identified best practices is a critical step to ameliorating this problem (Eddy, 2012). With this study, I sought to continue this process by examining the VCCS's Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative. More specifically through a formative program evaluation, I sought to garner an understanding how Success Coaches
achieved the initiative's goals, how the Success Coaches defined their roles of academic advising and academic coaching, and what programmatic elements they perceived supported student success at rural community colleges. Additionally, academic coaching has emerged recently within higher education as a possible means to bolster student engagement and student support to degree completion (NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011), yet scant research on this topic exists (Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; Webberman, 2011). As a result, my study sought to broaden the understanding of this newly emerging construct and to explore its place in the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative.

**URP Student Progression**

Since 1901, the number of community colleges has grown to include 1,132 colleges (AACC, 2013). The growth of community college enrollment has swelled to now include approximately 13 million students (AACC, 2013). By enrolling almost half of America's incoming undergraduate population (Berkner & Choy, 2008; McClenney, 2006; McClenney et al., 2007; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2015; Rosenbaum et al., 2007), community colleges are an integral part of the educational pipeline (Brint & Karabal, 1989). Figure A below displays student enrollment based on institutional type for first institution attended for the 2003-2004 academic school year (Berkner & Choy, 2008, p.5).
Notwithstanding their increased community college enrollment, URP aspirations to attain an associate degree or a four-year college baccalaureate degree via transfer have been impeded by a number of factors (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Potential challenges that have affected URP postsecondary aspirations include: lack of social capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003), lack of cultural capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006), lack of a rigorous high school transcript (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Green, 2006), lack of financial aid (Jehangir, 2010), working full-time and attending on a part-time basis (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Kotamraju & Blackman, 2011), and family demands (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Kotamraju & Blackman, 2011).

Underserved students in rural America experience similar URP challenges, such as poor academic preparation and family demands (Garza & Eller, 1998), while at the same time encountering unique challenges differing from their suburban and urban counterparts. Often these rural challenges are situated in “geography, economics,
finance, politics" (Williams, Pennington, Couch, & Dougherty, 2007, p. 25), and include "health problems, inadequate transportation, customs and attitudes that do not promote education (Garza & Eller, 1998, p. 37). [The increasing] "digital divide" (Cejda, 2007, p. 87) marks an additional way in which rural locales are challenged with providing educational opportunities for students. Of the "65 million people liv[ing] in rural America, 63 million...do not farm. Indeed, 96 percent of total income in rural areas, along with virtually all of the new-job growth, is from nonfarm sources" (Katsinas, 2007, para. 8). As a result, workforce development is crucial to revitalize rural communities and to fill the positions for middle skilled jobs (Achieve, 2012; Katsinas, 2007; White, 2010), making a community college degree all the more important for these regions.

Facing these arduous challenges, underserved student completion rates are understandably impacted and dropout rates for these students are high (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Bailey, Leinbach, & Jenkins, 2006). In fact, after one year within the community college sector, underserved students have a drop-out rate of nearly 30% compared to approximately 14 % among their more advantaged peers (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Additionally, community college six year outcomes revealed 51% of low-income and first-generation students were no longer enrolled, 30% of low-income and first-generation students had attained a certificate or an associate, whereas 23% of their advantaged peers had attained a certificate or an associate degree. Only 34% of low-income and first-generation students had attained a baccalaureate degree from a public four-year, whereas 66% of their advantaged peers had attained a baccalaureate degree from a public four-year (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 12). Figure B below shows six-year completion rates.
Figure B. *Six-year Completion Rate Persistent to Degree Attainment*

The difference in the non-degree completion rate and student postsecondary departure after year six between underserved and advantage students is roughly 20% (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Pointedly, URP remain disproportionally centralized in the two-year sector (Brint & Karabal, 1989; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Fike & Fike, 2008; Lovell, 2007; McClenney, 2004; McClenney et al., 2007; Rosenbaum et al., 2007), manifesting the “cooling out” of aspirations for bachelor’s degrees (Clark, 1960, p. 569).

Further examination of community college enrollment highlights how low-income and first-generation students constitute approximately half of the community college student population (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Engle & Tinto, 2008; McClenney, 2007; Nomi, 2005) and minorities represent 44% of community college student population (NCES, 2015, par.3). Drop-offs in participation for URP occur when examining four-year college student patterns as low-income and first-generation student (FGS) enrollment rates in public universities are 13% (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 10) and 37% for
minorities (NCES, 2015, par.3). Figures C and D display four-year and two-year sector minority enrollment. These are followed by figures E and F that present four-year and two-year sector low-income and first-generation enrollment patterns.

**Figure C: Minority Four-year College Enrollment Rate**

**Figure D: Minority Two-year College Enrollment Rate**
Even though underserved students have gained entry to higher education via community college enrollment, these students drop out of community college at higher rates compared to their more privileged peers and are left without a degree, the required
certificate, or the necessary credentials permitting transfer to a four-year institution, employment, or career advancement (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Green, 2006; Lincoln, 2009; McClenney et al., 2007; Rosenbaum et al., 2007).

As a result of this leaky pipeline, many community colleges are creating programs addressing URP persistence and degree completion (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Joch, 2009; McClenney, 2007, 2009). In Virginia, the VCCS crafted the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative to address persistence at its nine smaller rural colleges (VCCS, 2012a). The Success Coach’s job description (located in Appendix A) indicates coaches “must have knowledge and experience in... academic and career counseling skills... [also] work experience in counseling or academic coaching is preferred” (VCCS, 2012a, p. 5). Academic advising is when “an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter” (Kuhn, 2008, p. 3). Academic direction includes academic program choice, course selection, and scheduling classes (Brown, 2008; NACADA, 2006). Nevertheless, the term “coach” positioned in the initiative’s title has implications when juxtaposed to academic advising (International Coaching Federation [ICF], 2013, para. 12; Kuhn, 2008). According to the International Coach Federation (ICF), coaching is defined “as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (ICF, 2013, para. 6). What remains unknown, is how VCCS conceptualized the program (e.g., focused on advising or focused on coaching) and how the program has influenced student outcomes. How are Success Coaches navigating within this new campus-based initiative? How do coaches perceive the program’s impact on student success? More telling still is if the promising practices influencing student
outcomes remains germane only to the home institution or are transferable through the
"cross-college opportunities for information exchange" (VCCS, 2012a, p. 1).

Student Outcomes

Current research highlights how student engagement connects to student success
(Krause, 2005; Kuh, 2009; McClenney, 2007; McClenney & Marti, 2006; Pascarella
1997; Townsend, Donaldson, & Wilson, 2009). In response to linkages amid student
engagement and student outcomes, "courageous conversations" (Lincoln, 2009, para. 4)
have ensued. These targeted and transparent conversations involved institutional leaders,
faculty, and staff examining their data along with their institutional practices, identifying
problems, acknowledging potential challenges to resolve issues, and developing an action
plan (Lincoln, 2009). Often the term student success is espoused when examining
student learning outcomes. Yet despite the extensive use of this term, a universal
definition does not exist for student success (Luczyk, 2012; Nitecki, 2011; Tinto &
Pusser, 2006). Typically, a frequent indicator identified in the literature for student
success is graduation rates (AACC, 2013; Kotamraju & Blackman, 2011; Laanan, 2001;
Laden, 2004; Mullen, 2012; Nitecki, 2011; SREB, 2010; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004).
Yet, dependency on a traditional model of success built on treating the sameness of all
postsecondary students with a historical, advantaged peer lens for measuring student
success is not always appropriate (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Mullin,
2012) given that community college admission is nonselective and the composition of the
two-year student body is pluralistic.

Because of the conditions surrounding community colleges, consideration of other
metrics that ameliorate and account for the range of ways to measure and define student
success is needed to create a more complete picture (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Mullin, 2012). Such metrics would recognize milestone achievements of coursework credits earned, passage of gatekeeper coursework, or workforce program completion (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Mullin, 2012). “This approach credits incremental progress and takes into account wide variation in student pathways” (Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p. 440). How outcomes are defined influence the data required to measure success and the ultimate reporting out of achievement of student and institutional outcome goals.

In Virginia, the VCCS defines student success as when “a student... transfers, graduates (with an associate degree, certificate, or diploma), or completes a recognized workforce credential” (VCCS, 2010, p. 20). Although able to define student success, understand what precipitates student departure, “and in some cases why students persist, [yet researchers] are... unable to tell institutions what to do to help students stay and persist” (Tinto & Pusser, 2006, p.2). Consequently, colleges are faced with the challenge to identify “better links between research findings and best practices” (Eddy, 2012, p. 103) as they develop programs to promote student success. To this end, the VCCS established the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative. Much remains unknown about the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative program. Questions to be answered include: What has worked? What has not? What can be scaled up to other institutions?

National and State Initiatives

In response to increased institutional accountability for improved student engagement and student outcomes (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Joch, 2009; McClenney, 2007, 2009), several foundations have supported new programs, and other federal and
state initiatives have been implemented. Currently, nearly 15 national initiatives are actively addressing degree attainment (Russell, 2011). For example, in 2004 Lumina and seven founding partners instituted the Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count (ATD) foundation initiative (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Lincoln, 2009). This student-centered model employed a multi-prong approach to address “guiding evidence-based institutional change, influencing public policy, generating knowledge development, public policy, and engaging the public” (ATD, 2012b, para. 1). At the heart of this initiative is promoting student academic success and persistence to degree attainment, (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Joch, 2009) “particularly for low-income students and students of color” (Rutschow et al., 2011, p. 1). Central to this program is using data-driven decision making to alter programs based on feedback of student outcomes.

Additionally in 2009, Lumina launched its “Big Goal” (Lumina Foundation, 2014, para. 1) initiative to achieve “60 percent of Americans obtain[ing] a high quality postsecondary degree or credential by 2025” (Lumina Foundation, 2014, para. 4). In order to achieve this goal, Lumina targeted “low-income and first-generation students, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, veterans and adults who have some college but lack a credential” (Lumina Foundation, 2014, para. 3). As a result of their groundbreaking efforts, Lumina’s Big Goal has gained momentum and influence at the federal level and in the higher education system (Lumina Foundation, 2014). One notable federal initiative that is aligned with Lumina’s 2025 strategic plan is the American Graduation Initiative (Obama, 2009a, 2009b).

The American Graduation Initiative (AGI) is a student-centered model with a multi-prong approach (Berube, 2010). President Obama introduced AGI on July 14,
2009, with the goal of reestablishing America’s international ranking for college graduates to first place, which requires an additional 5 million college graduates by 2020 (Kotamraju & Blackmon, 2011). Community colleges were identified as a key actor in achieving this goal (Berube, 2010; Obama, 2009a, 2009b) and targeted to receive funding to help meet the expected goals. Regrettably AGI’s potential impact to increase student success, by promoting institutional change, building capacity, “moderniz[ing] facilities, and provid[ing] online learning opportunities” (Obama, 2009a, para. 5) was hampered when the proposed 12 billion budget was diminished to a 2 billion approved budget (Berube, 2010; Obama, 2009a, 2009b). The committed funding has been administered through the Department of Labor (DOL) to fund the U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program. In an effort “to help put Americans back to work and improve the U.S. economy[,] TAACCT resources are directed at a diversity of low skill and low income adults” (Bragg, 2013, para. 1).

The TAACCCT multi-year grants are distributed to “community colleges...with funds to expand and improve their ability to deliver education and career training programs that can be completed in two years or less” (United States Department of Labor [USDOL], 2014, para. 2). One notable method of TAACCCT financial support is the Community College Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) led by the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) and a consulting firm, The Collaboratory (Bragg, 2013). Buttressing workforce development and the American economy, TCI seeks to “document...the implement[ation] and scaling innovations designed to improve outcomes for diverse learners, including students historically
underserved by higher education” (Bragg, 2013, para. 2). Thus far, TCI has 231 participating community colleges within 24 states leading the charge for garnering “evidence-based strategies…improv[ing]…student success...[through] collaborative partnerships...[resulting in the] transformative change of community colleges” (Office of Community College Research and Leadership [OCCRL], 2013, p.1). Data and research results on success due to these initiatives are just emerging from these programs.

Originating from within the community college sector, The Completion Agenda: A Call to Action nationally addresses student outcomes (McPhail, 2011). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Commission and Board of Directors indicated their commitment to assist members in addressing completion barriers and yielding “50% more students with high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020” (McPhail, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, focus groups were conducted and assigned discussion points: “1. Commitment and how to get it; 2. Accountability for outcomes; 3. Completion toolkit; and 4. Obstacles and how to overcome them” (McPhail, 2011, p. 2). The suggested outcome included identifying promising practices to “enhance and sustain college completion” (McPhail, 2011, p. 2). To that end, as “the primary advocacy organization for the nation’s community colleges” (McPhail, 2011, p. 10), AACC reaffirmed their pledge to co-labor with community colleges in heartily responding to “a call to action” (McPhail, 2011, p. 2). What remains unknown is how this commitment has manifested in practice.

Another national initiative was specifically designed to address America’s rural community colleges, namely the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) (AACC, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998). Funded by the Ford Foundation from 1994 through 2002,
the RCCI program consisted of 24 participating member colleges. Its focus was two-fold, to assist rural community colleges in severely destitute and distraught locales in promoting postsecondary access to “underserved and disadvantaged populations” (Garza & Eller, 1998, p. 32) and to help participating rural colleges act as a catalyst facilitating local and regional economic development (AACC, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998). The RCCI indicated lessons learned from this initiative included: leadership, specifically the institution’s president, is paramount in possessing the political aptitude to navigate at the community, state, and federal levels to build essential collaborative relationships; campus leaders must champion the commitment to sustainability; institutional transformation is attainable but is a long-term process; and application of a community-based framework builds the environmental capacity for students to reside and work in their community rather than migrate-out (Garza & Eller, 1998; Miller & Tuttle, 2006).

As the review in this section illustrated, to date, numerous national initiatives have ensued and considerable research has been conducted, yet what remains to be identified are transferable promising best practices to increase URP persistence to degree attainment for students, particularly students attending rural community colleges. Given the weightiness of the rural community college presence, why has the RCCI funding expired without any new national initiatives specifically targeting rural community colleges surfaced? Is their value only expressed in words from political speeches and has yet to materialize into an equitable funding stream?

At the state level in 2011, Virginia too responded to the call to increase student success and the 2011 Higher Education Opportunity Act of Virginia, also known as Top Jobs for the 21st century (TJ21), passed unanimously. This bill has three core objectives:
"reform-based investment in higher education, affordable access for low- and middle-income students and improved economic opportunity" (Higher Education Opportunity Act of Virginia, 2011, para. 2). Commonwealth higher education institutions are being challenged to confer 100,000 additional college degrees graduates by 2026. Furthermore, TJ21 is preparing its citizenry for top jobs in today’s “knowledge economy” (Bailey et al., 2003, p. 1).

Building upon national and state initiatives, the Virginia Community College System furthered challenged its 23 colleges to increase URP student success by 75% (VCCS, 2010). In 2009, The State Board of Community Colleges approved VCCS’s strategic plan, Achieve 2015, which consists of a five prong approach: “access, affordability, student success, workforce, and resources” (VCCS, 2010, p. 6). VCCS defined underrepresented populations as “students who are low-income Pell recipients, who reside in a specific domicile, are first-generation, or are of minority ethnicity or race” (VCCS, 2010, p. 5). The URP residential component is based on the locality being “in the lowest quintile of participation rates at Virginia public four-year institutions” (VCCS, 2010, p. 5). By the 2015 mark, VCCS data projected URP enrollment would grow and concluded URP persistence to degree attainment is critical to the initiative’s success (VCCS, 2010). Between 2005 and 2011, URP enrollment increased and surpassed non-URP of students, yet these underrepresented students still lagged behind in exceeding a grade point average of a 2.0, passing 80% of credited coursework, and graduating or transferring to a four-year institution (VCCS, 2011).

As the nation and states have focused attention and resources on the community college sector, the need for research is critical to develop effective policies and
in institutional practices increasing URP persistence to degree attainment (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Davies, 2006; Eddy, 2012). More pressing still, is the need for targeted research on America’s rural community colleges, the underserved students they serve, and best practices promoting degree attainment. Within the Virginia Community College System, 18 of its 23 community colleges are rural which accounts for “75 percent of the Commonwealth’s geography” (VCCS, 2012b, p. 1). Recently the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education (VFCCE) launched the Horseshoe Initiative targeting 14 of Virginia’s rural community colleges (VCCS, 2012b). Of note, Rappahannock which is classified as a small suburban (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014) was included as one of the participating institutions and denoted as a rural community college. The horseshoe encompasses almost three-fourths of Virginia’s geography (VCCS, 2012b). Upon examination, the nearly two million residents dwelling within “Virginia’s Rural Horseshoe” (VCCS, 2012b, p. 1) are: disproportionately less educated with 1 in 4 without a high school degree, only completing a bachelor’s degree or higher at a rate of 19%, prone to poverty at a range of 12% to 19%, unemployed at a rate exceeding 30%, receiving government assistance, overly represented in the foster care system, facing wellness and medical issues. As a result, these areas are experiencing a “lost population” (VCCS, 2012b, p. 2) with residents migrating-out to live and work elsewhere (Miller & Tuttle, 2006).

Conversely, the other regions of Virginia are diametrically opposite indicating economic growth and greater educational attainment rates “with over 38% of its citizens having at least [a] bachelor’s degree” (VCCS, 2012b, p. 1) in the urban crescent. “If left unchecked, Virginia will be divided into two states economically” (VCCS, 2012b, p. 1),
and a substantial proportion of the Commonwealth’s residents will face permanent poverty and reliance on government assistance (VCCS, 2012b). To this end, the VFCC identified the VCCS as “the only entity with the capability, capacity and track record to address this challenge” (VCCS 2012b, p. 3). In order to swiftly ameliorate the educational disparity, increase postsecondary attainment, promote economic opportunities, and prepare rural residents for 21st century employment the initiative will funnel resources through the VCCS 14 participating rural community colleges (VCCS, 2012b). The program focus of the VCCS on rural community colleges seeks to rebuild capacity of rural communities thereby creating a more educated citizenry.

Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative

In an effort to shore up Achieve 2015 goals of bolstering student persistence and degree attainment, Dr. Glenn DuBois, Chancellor for the VCCS, fashioned the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative in 2012 (VCCS, 2012a). With persistence issues more evident at smaller colleges located in rural areas, the nine smallest institutions within VCCS were identified. Desired program outcomes included identifying strengths and successful strategies followed by sharing the data through “cross-college opportunities for information exchange” (VCCS, 2012a, p. 1).

Furthermore, VCCS will use the Initiative’s data to retool policies promoting underserved students’ success and to meet the Achieve 2015 and TJ21 initiatives (VCCS, 2012a). Examination of the Success Coach’s role and the elements promoting student success within rural community sector are needed now that the program has been in place for two years. If America wants to impact and improve overall URP community college student engagement and student outcomes, then consideration of rural community
colleges and initiatives germane to that sector identifying best practices is critical as rural community colleges currently comprise the majority of all community colleges in the country (Eddy, 2012; RCCA, 2012) and enroll one out of every three of the nation’s community college students (Eddy, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this formative evaluation study was to explore and understand Success Coaches’ experiences with the URP participants within the rural community college context. The goals of this study were to provide a formative evaluation of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative and to identify elements of promising practices based on perceptions of the Success Coaches at the nine participating rural colleges. In this study, I sought to understand how Success Coaches achieved the initiative’s goals, how the Success Coaches defined their role of academic advising and academic coaching, and what elements the Success Coaches perceived promoted student success. Since the Initiative is a change to the institutional structure at the campus level, my lens for understanding the program’s implementation process establishing the framework for the Success Coaches in how they approached their position and the achievement of the goals set forth in the Initiative is from change theory (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

Research Questions

The primary three research questions addressed for this formative evaluation study were:

1. How did the Success Coaches achieve the updated goals outlined by the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative?
Within this question, were the following two sub-questions:

a. What supports were evident to the coaches that helped goal achievement?

b. What challenges were evident to the coaches that hindered goal achievement?

2. What elements of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative did the coaches perceive supported student success?

3. How do the Success Coaches’ perceived program strengths that supported student success align with emerging literature on academic coaching?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this formative evaluation study is three-fold. First, at the practical level, this study provided data on a program that has yet to be formally evaluated. The data collected provided participating institutions feedback for program enhancement and modifications. Furthermore, the data collected provided feedback to VCCS for consideration of program adjustments during the next two years of the funding for the program.

With nearly half of America’s current jobs comprised of middle skill positions, (Achieve, 2012; Lincoln, 2009) and the impending shortfall of three million middle skills workers projected by 2018 (Achieve, 2012), examination and development of best practices for community college student completion is essential. This study provided data that can be used as a possible resource in developing similar programming statewide within the VCCS to address degree attainment of other populations of students and to decrease the gap of middle skills workers. More specifically, the data can be used to support the Virginia Horseshoe Initiative as it too seeks to bolster degree attainment of its rural community colleges.
Third, on a broader level, this study added to a limited body of research regarding the rural community college and its underserved students. In much of the literature on persistence to degree attainment and students' tertiary experiences, the voices of the community colleges and its underserved students are absent (Beach, 2010; Marti, 2009; McClenney, 2007; Pascarella, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004; Townsend et al., 2009). Additionally, this study expanded the narrow body of literature on academic coaching within the two-year sector (Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; Webberman, 2011). Since rural community colleges are being touted as the linchpin in addressing America's education, economic, and global competitiveness dilemma (Achieve, 2012; Davies, 2006; Eddy, 2012; Obama, 2009a, b; White, 2010), further research on rural community colleges and its URP of students is crucial.

Definition of Key Terms

**Academic advising** - Occurs when "an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 3). Academic direction includes academic program choice, course selection, and scheduling classes (Brown, 2008; NACADA, 2006).

**Academic coaching** - Is a collaborative relationship using conversation to help a student increase self-awareness, achieve established academic and personal goals, and maximize potential (NACADA, 2014, Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011).

**Culture of anecdote** - Entails sharing inspiring stories about individuals attending community college who faced insurmountable odds and persevered (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005).
Culture of evidence – Entails evidence-based data-driven decision-making to promote student outcomes and institutional performance (McClenney et al., 2007).

First-generation – Students whose parents did not attend college (Choy, 2001; VCCS, 2011).

Low-income – A student whose “Pell award is more than $0” (VCCS, 2010, p. 5).

Middle-Skills Jobs – Jobs within the workforce requiring education beyond a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree. Education meeting this requirement is an “associate degree, postsecondary certificate, [or an] apprenticeship (Achieve, 2012, p. 2).

Minorities – Students whose “race/ethnicity value is anything other than White, Unknown, or Not Specified, and if the student is not a non-resident alien” (VCCS, 2012a, p. 4).

Pell Grant – Pell is a federally operated program that “provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain post baccalaureate students to promote access to postsecondary education” (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2012, par. 1).

Pell Status – Any student receiving “any Pell award during a specific year” (VCCS, 2012a, p. 4).

Rural Community College – Is classified as a community college either located within a Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area or a Metropolitan Statistical Area with a total population less than 500,000 or it is located outside of these metropolitan statistical areas (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014).

Student Success – Activities and/or supports that assist the student with continued
enrollment. The capstone is “a student [who] successful[ly] transfers, graduates with an associate degree, certificate, or diploma or completes a recognized workforce credential” (VCCS, 2010, p. 20).

Tuition Differential Investment Pool – This investment pool fund are internal discretionary funds for the Chancellor’s dispersal (VCCS, 2012a).

Underserved Students – Students who are one or more of the following: first-generation, ethnic/racial minority, or low-income (Bragg et al., 2006; Green, 2006).

Underrepresented Populations (URP) – According to the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative, URP are identified “as a result of meeting one or more of three criteria: race/ethnicity, Pell status, and first generation, and who have completed 14 or fewer college credits” (VCCS, 2012a, p. 2). For the purpose of this study, the term URP will utilize the definition set forth by the CCSCI with the understanding that Pell Status for undergraduate students implies low-income status. Moreover according to the literature, VCCS definition of URP is interchangeable with the term underserved students and for the purposes of this study will be so as well.

Summary

Over the past 40 years, the underserved student presence in tertiary education has grown tremendously, specifically within the two-year sector (Brint & Karabal, 1989; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Fike & Fike, 2008; Lovell, 2007). In fact, community colleges currently enroll nearly half of incoming undergraduate students (Lincoln, 2009; Nitecki, 2011). Despite increased access, URP persistence to degree attainment remains abysmal compared to their advantaged peers (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Kim,
According to NCES (2012), almost 65% of associate degrees conferred in 2011 were conferred to White students. As a result of the URP not being on parity, the nation's focus has shifted from entrance into the postsecondary educational pipeline to the exit point producing increased student outcomes (Eddy, 2012).

To help combat this lack of student success, numerous national and state initiatives have been implemented to develop policies and institutional best practices to bolster URP student success (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Joch, 2009; Lumina Foundation, 2014; McClenny, 2007, 2009; McPhail, 2011; OCCRL, 2013). Recently, the national spotlight has cast community colleges at the forefront in buttressing the American economy and global competitiveness (Achieve, 2012; Lumina Foundation, 2014; Obama, 2009a, 2009b; OCCRL, 2013; Rothkopf, 2009; Russell, 2011). The "importance of higher education is inescapable" (Tagg, 2007, p. 17) and community colleges are positioned to take the leading role.

One segment of the two-year sector often unnoticed, yet whose presence has grown rapidly, is the rural community college. Context matters for the college student experience as the recent reconfiguration of the Carnegie classification system unearthed that all community colleges are not the same (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014). Underserved rural community college students experience not only similar challenges that URP students attending other community colleges do, but also navigate challenges unique to their locale (Cejda, 2007; Garza & Eller, 1998; Katsinas, 2007; Williams et al., 2007). To this end, it is critical to garner promising best practices for underserved students attending rural community colleges given their presentation in
the larger community college landscape (Eddy, 2012). What remains unknown is the role rural community colleges will play in achieving both state and national goals for student completion, especially for underserved students.

Recently in 2012, the Virginia Community College System implemented the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative. Success Coaches were placed at the Virginia Community Colleges System’s nine smaller rural colleges as catalyst to support a targeted underserved student population and to promote their persistence to degree attainment (VCCS, 2012a). As the program enters year three, a formative program evaluation permitted the coaches to share their perspective of the program, how they met the initial goals of the program, what supports and challenges were evident, and what elements they feel fostered student success.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

"Access without support is not opportunity" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 46)

Rural community colleges are a critical link supporting educational opportunities to America’s heartland. Due to geographic limitations, rural community colleges provide access to the postsecondary educational pipeline and are a stepping stone out of poverty for many of its citizens (Katsinas, 2007; VCCS, 2012b). Pointedly, rural community colleges comprise of 64% of the two year sector in the nation (Katsinas, 2010; RCCA, 2012). In response to national and state demands, it is imperative for rural community colleges to identify promising practices that help students achieve degree completion. To help achieve these outcomes, the Virginia Community College System’s (VCCS) created the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative (CCSCI) that was reviewed in Chapter 1. The goal of this initiative is to increase underrepresented populations (URP) of students’ persistence to attainment through the intervention of a Success Coach (VCCS, 2012a). In this research study, I sought to understand how Success Coaches achieved the initiative’s goals, how the Success Coaches defined their role of academic advising and academic coaching, and what elements the Success Coaches perceived promoted student success.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a salient review of relevant literature, identify existing gaps in the research, and outline how this program evaluation extended the current body of research. The chapter opens with a brief overview of the existing literature on the transformations in higher education leading to the community college’s development, followed by the development of the Virginia Community College System, leading to the discussion of the rural community college presence and its significance.
within the realm of higher education. The chapter continues with discussing the Virginia’s Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative. Specifically within this initiative, academic coaching is examined. As a result, pertinent literature pertaining to coaching, its development, and relevant studies employing academic coaching are examined. The chapter concludes with identifying existing gaps within the literature and articulating how my study may extend the body of research on academic coaching, specifically with underrepresented populations (URP) attending rural community colleges.

Transformation of Higher Education

Historically, American higher education was structured for the elite (Beach, 2010; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cohen & Kisker, 2010). During the 19th century, the nation’s educational base expanded with the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862 and the Second Morrill Act of 1890. As a result, students lacking the means or the background to be educated privately received the opportunity for social mobility, professional development, and economic and cultural benefits attainable through public education (Carstensen, 1962; Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Geiger, 1998).

This transformation of American’s higher education system continued into the 20th century with three salient pieces of legislation: the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (US Department of Veteran Affairs, 2013), The President’s Commission on Education (Beach, 2010), and 1954 Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in Brown v. Board of Education case (Enyia, 2009). Consequently, mass enrollment of diverse students occurred. The community colleges’ open-access, open-enrollment, low-tuition cost was
the primary access point for this influx of diverse student enrollment (Beach, 2010; Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

**Community college development.** The first two-year public junior college, Joliet Junior College, was established 1901 in Joliet, Illinois (Beach, 2010; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The development of junior colleges was in response to major state universities and elite private institutions wanting to maintain selective admissions and the increased demand for college access rapidly expanding in the early 1900s (Beach, 2010; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Levine, 1986). From their inception, junior colleges were deemed preparatory for those students who were either too young or poor to matriculate directly from high school to a four-year institution (Beach, 2010; Levine, 1986). In addition to the established transfer pathway, another curriculum track providing a terminal degree emphasizing semiprofessional careers was introduced. Elite private and state institutions hoped this terminal degree pathway would manifest the “cooling out” (Clark, 1960, p. 569) of aspirations for bachelor’s degrees (Beach, 2010; Levine, 1986) thereby lessening the demands of expansion for four-year colleges as well as espousing traditional four-year colleges epitomizes academic prestige and rigor.

In the 1950s, the junior college underwent a name change, which continues today with two-year colleges are now referred to as the community college. The name change signified a shift from the original precollege/transfer mission to a more comprehensive focus on continuing education, workforce development, and a host of other programming (Beach, 2010; Floyd, Haley, Eddy, & Antczak, 2009; Gleazer, 1994). Despite the name change, community colleges have maintained their dualist role; preparatory for those
underrepresented students desiring matriculation to a four-year institution and providing a terminal degree/certificate (Beach, 2010; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Levine, 1986).

**Rural Community Colleges**

In an effort to delineate variances between community colleges, the Carnegie Foundation’s updated database system identifies community colleges by their geographic location and size (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014; Eddy, 2007). This systematic change in 2005 resulted in the reporting of rural community college representation in the two-year sector, where rural colleges “make up 64 percent of all two-year institutions… and educate 33 percent of all community college students each year” (Katsinas, 2010, pp. 9, 11). A rural community college is defined as a public two-year institution either located within a Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area or a Metropolitan Statistical Area with a total population less than 500,000 or it is located outside of these metropolitan statistical areas (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014). The Carnegie database system further classified rural community colleges based upon student enrollment into the categories of small, medium, and large. Student enrollment under 2,500 defines small community colleges, while midsized has a student enrollment of 2,500 – 7,500, and a large community college enrolls over 7,500 full-time equivalent students (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014; Eddy, 2007; Hardy & Katsinas, 2007).

Carnegie’s revised database system clearly illuminates the substantial postsecondary presence of rural community college’s and further drills down to reveal the variations within the rural community college spectrum. The variability of institutional
type highlights that all rural community colleges are not the same (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014; Hardy & Katsinas, 2007; Katsinas, 2010). Moreover, all rural community colleges are not on equal footing compared to their urban and suburban counterparts in regards to governance, curriculum and program offerings, student services, and funding (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007; Katsinas, 2010).

As the fastest growing institutional type amid community colleges, rural community colleges are in dire need of funding distribution equity (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007; Katsinas, 2010). Yet, more often than not, rural community colleges are overlooked and invisible as the lion share of funding is doled out to their urban and suburban community college counterparts (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007; Katsinas, 2010). In order to level the “playing field...[m]ore effective and equitable federal and state appropriations, as well as the development of special funding programs that address the needs of rural communities, are sorely needed” (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007, p.15).

Exacerbating this funding shortfall are increases in student enrollment, lack of building capacity, limited partnerships with private businesses, difficulty in enticing full-time faculty, challenges in hiring qualified part-time faculty, and demands on technology infrastructures (Cejda, 2007; Katsinas, 2010; Nelson, 2010). Consequently, national and state demands being placed on rural community colleges to increase student degree attainment, necessitates policymakers rethinking the funding stream to shore up the resource equity gap (Fluharty & Scaggs, 2007; Katsinas, 2010). States are employing a range of strategies to address these issues.
Virginia Community College System

The mission of the Virginia Community College System since its inception in 1966 (VCCS, 2014a) follows: “We give everyone the opportunity to learn and develop the right skills so lives and communities are strengthened” (VCCS, 2014c, para. 1). By 1972, all 23 community colleges in Virginia were established. From 1987 until the present, VCCS has evolved meeting the varying needs of the community, the state, as well as the nation. Moreover throughout its 45 year tenure of espousing educational excellence and innovation, VCCS has continued serving its citizenry and bolstering the Commonwealth’s economics though resourceful programming such as dual enrollment, on-line coursework, workforce training, the Middle College recovery program for high school dropouts, guaranteed graduation articulation agreements, Career Coaches supporting secondary students with career and college readiness, Great Expectations program targeted to aid foster care students with postsecondary aspirations, and most recently the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative (CCSCI) seeks to buttress degree attainment of URPs attending designated rural colleges (VCCS, 2014a, 2012a). The following section provides more detail on the CCSCI

Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative

At the state level, Virginia Community College System’s Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative (VCCS, 2012a) was implemented to address the critical dilemma of community college student persistence to degree attainment, specifically for minority, low-income, and first-generation students attending identified rural community colleges. Launched in 2012, the program was initially approved for a two-year period: 2012 - 2013 and 2013 - 2014 academic school years. The initiative acknowledged the
persistence rate at smaller rural community colleges is lower than other institutions in the system and thereby intentionally targeted the nine smallest rural community colleges (VCCS, 2012a). The selected institutions consisted of five small (Dabney S. Lancaster, Eastern Shore, Paul D. Camp, Rappahannock, and Virginia Highlands) and four midsized (Mountain Empire, Patrick Henry, Southwest Virginia, and Wytheville) institutions (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014; VCCS, 2012a). Of note, within the VCCS, 17 of the 23 community colleges are classified as rural (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014), however, the CCSCI also included Rappahannock. Rappahannock is primarily classified as a small suburban, yet this campus is located in rural Glenns, Virginia and enrolls only 3,700 students. Based on the enrollment categories for rural community colleges, Rappahannock would be midsized. Thus, for the purposes of this study and the initiative, Rappahannock is considered a rural college.

In order to foster institutional change, the CCSCI espoused a student-centered approach. The initiative puts students at the heart of programming. Here the Success Coach serves as a facilitator to provide focused support leading to the students’ ability to construct knowledge rather than the traditional method of having knowledge funneled and assimilated (Smart, Witt, & Scott, 2012). For the duration of the initiative, participating institution’s hired two full-time restricted college Success Coaches and one part-time restricted college success program specialist. Once on board, coaches identified 200 potential underserved student participants at their institution (VCCS, 2012a). For this initiative, an underserved student “meets one or more of the following
criteria: minority race/ethnicity status, Pell status, and first-generation, and completed 14 or fewer college credits” (VCCS, 2012a, p. 2).

Once a caseload was established, the college Success Coach’s position revolves around scaffolding and providing direct student support promoting academic success resulting in degree attainment and identifying promising practices. The coaches dedicated their efforts to working with participating students to develop an individualized academic plan, assist with financial aid and scholarship paperwork, serve as a conduit for connecting them with campus resources, act as an early alert system, as well as actively engage with Student Orientation Classes (VCCS, 2012a). A detailed job description for the college Success Coach is located in Appendix A.

The funding stream for the CCSCI was drawn from the Tuition Differential Investment Pool (TDIP). This pool of funding is an internal discretionary fund for the Chancellor’s dispersal (VCCS, 2012a). For the 2013 and the 2014 academic school years, each of the nine participating institutions received $150,000. From this funding source, coaches were allocated $1000 to secure relevant technology. Moreover, for each programming year, participating institutions were subsidized an additional $7,500, which was dedicated for coaches’ professional development and training. This subsidy also covered all system office staff functionalities (VCCS, 2012a). In September 2014, the VCCS revised the original goals from eight to 10 and then when the coaches’ performance was assessed the goals used were again updated and the results on the first three from these updated goals were presented October 2014 at the annual Workforce Academy (Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 2014). A summary
reflecting these adjustments to the initiatives goals drawing from the outcome measures identified and the Success Coach’s job description is located in Appendix B.

**Coaching**

The word *coach* is increasingly used in academic settings to identify personnel providing support functions for students. Historically,

"Coach" was first used in the modern sense of a sport coach in the 1880s (referring specifically to one who trained a team of athletes to win a boat race). Previously (beginning in the 1840s), the word "coach" was used colloquially at Oxford University to refer to a private (vs. university) tutor who prepared a student for an examination. But the very first use of the word "coach" in English occurred in the 1500s to refer to a particular kind of carriage. (It still does.) Hence the root meaning of the verb "to coach:" to convey a valued person from where he or she was to where he or she wanted to be (Evered & Selman, 2001, pp. 31-32).

Today’s usage of the term *coach*, draws deeply from this root meaning of a coach’s role to support the coachee in the discovery process of identifying personal strengths wherein self-directed growth is promoted (Gallwey, 2000; Whitmore, 2013). Since its first usage in the world of sports, coaching is finding utility in the arenas of business, nursing, K-12 sector, and more recently higher education.

The most enduring usage of the term *coach* in America is in the sports world (Gallwey, 2000; Whitmore, 2013). Traditionally, coaching was authoritative-based dictating and pressuring athletes towards the ultimate goal—winning (Gallwey, 2000; Hay & Kalmakis, 2007). Recently, sports psychology revealed the coach-athlete
relationship impacted the quality of the “athletes’ motivation and ... performance” (Mageau & Vallerad, 2003, p. 884). As a result, the fundamentals of this relationship have been recast wherein the coaches’ behavior supported and assisted players to unlock their personal best (Gallwey, 2000; Mageau & Vallerad, 2003; Whitmore, 2013). The tenets for enhancing the coach-athlete relationship are “perceptions of closeness, common goals, open communication, and cooperative interactions” (Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007, p. 556). The thrust of coaching is not exclusively focused on winning but has shifted to cultivating a collaborative supportive relationship whereby athletes maximize their potential (Gallwey, 2000; Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). These same attributes common to coaching in sports are also applied to the new arenas in which coaching is now emerging.

Expanding its presence into the field of business, coaching is used in management and executive development (Evered & Selman, 2001; Grant & Stober, 2006; Witherspoon & White, 1996). Often the managerial paradigm is steeped in hierarchical authority to control, force compliance, and distribute consequences (Evered & Selman, 2001). Corporate America is being challenged to reshape and rethink its traditional organizational culture and management models. By embracing coaching, it has shifted the manager’s conversation from “do as I say” to “how can I support to you achieve the team’s goal.” Coaching then becomes a “managerial activity of creating, by communication only, the climate, environment, and context that empowers individuals and teams to generate results” (Evered & Selman, 2001, p. 18). Furthermore, coaching requires management to engage in the fundamental art of “listen[ing], especially for commitment and for the possibility of action out of that commitment” (Evered & Selman,
The underpinnings for this contextual change in how we use the term coach is the revelation that genuine relationship and partnership grounded in trust and joint commitment garner greater quality of productivity than exercising dogmatic control (Evered & Selman, 2001).

Since the 1980s, executive development has become a launching pad for professional coaching resulting in a $1 billion dollar annual coaching fee industry (Sherman & Freas, 2004). Executive coaching is an organizational development intervention to assist individuals in developing essential skills, improving professional performance, or equipping for future professional levels (Kilburg, 2000; Grant & Stober, 2006; Witherspoon & White, 1996). Three essential outcomes for the executive are to “learn, grow, and change” (Witherspoon & White, 1996, p. 126). The success of this activity is achieved through a collaborative partnership, the coach engaging the executive with effective questioning, the construction of attainable goals, resulting in the executive’s ability to self-direct (Kilburg, 2000; Grant & Stober, 2006; Witherspoon & White, 1996).

During the latter 20th century, coaching emerged in nursing literature (Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; Lewis, 1996). Acknowledging coaching benefits, the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (2012) inserted coaching as a mandated core competency. Nurse Practitioners (NP) as well as Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) have embraced coaching practices as a tool to heighten their professional competencies, foster nursing development, and promote quality of family and patient healthcare (Carter, 2007; Donner & Wheeler, 2009; Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; Lewis, 1996). Within this sector, coaching is defined as:
a collaborative relationship undertaken between a coach and a willing individual, the client. It is time-limited and focused and uses conversations to help clients achieve their goals. It demands skill on the part of the coach in facilitating meaningful conversations and letting the client "lead" (Donner & Wheeler, 2009, p. 9).

College programs are therefore adjusting their curriculums to prepare nursing graduates to enter into the profession with these skills. Essential characteristics promoting this collaborative relationship call for the coach to:

"provide a nurturing, trusting, and honest relationship, ...facilitate the acquisitions and practice of both technical and behavioral skills, ...assist [with identifying] the nurse[’s] learning needs, ...provide [the nurse with] feedback, and [establish] an open line of communication" (Lewis, 1996, p. 50). Mirroring the coaching function in business, nursing professionals seek to support novices to the profession in reaching their greatest potential.

During the 21st century, the concept of coaching expanded into the educational sector. In response to increased national and state K-12 mandates, coaching is being used through the avenue of professional development to better support and enhance teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). One notable coaching method, evocative coaching, employs "a teacher-centered, no-fault, strength-based coaching model" (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010, p. 18). Building upon the foundation of trust and rapport, evocative coaching seeks to "motivat[e]...people, through conversation...so they achieve desired outcomes and enhance their quality of life" (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010, p. 7). As the coaching community
within the educational sector is establishing methods of shoring up teachers, there is a need to expand its application with supporting and enhancing students.

Recently, the expansion of the coaching movement in the educational sector has emerged in higher education. Specifically, academic coaching has become more prominent in college setting to address improving student's persistence to degree attainment (NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011). To this end, academic coaching has become the keystone in the lexicon of higher education. Academic coaching distinctly differs from academic advising (Webberman, 2011). The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) defined academic coaching as follows:

an interactive process focus[ing] on the personal relationship created between the student and the coach. The coach challenges the student to think about...academic [and] educational goals. [Throughout] this learning process,...the coach encourage[s] the student to become more self-aware by [identifying innate] strengths, values, interests, purpose, and passion (NACADA, 2014, para. 3).

Through a continual committed partnership, academic coaches use “powerful questions to facilitate [the coaching process]...to help students produce fulfilling results in their lives” (Webberman, 2011, pp. 18-19). Utilizing “self-assessment, reflection, and goal setting” (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 27) students assume personal accountability and responsibility for “their actions, improve[ing] their effectiveness, and...creat[ing] their [life] outcomes” (Webberman, 2001, p. 19). Academic coaching has served as the conduit creating the needed space for student development and growth (Robinson &
Gahagan, 2010; NACADA, 2014; Webberman, 2011). Although academic coaching has taken center stage as an intervention method to address student persistence to degree attainment, research is thin as this concept is nascent (Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007). From this study, I will broaden the conversation regarding academic coaching; more specifically I will provide the Success Coaches’ perspective and seek to glean promising practices resulting from the implementation of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative.

Common Coaching Elements

As noted above, the concept of coaching is used in an array of sectors, yet currently there is no agreement on a singular definition of the term. Brennan and Prior (2005), purport rather than becoming entrenched in establishing a universal prescriptive definition, a better usage of energy and resources would be to identify common elements to forge a broad descriptive definition of coaching. Upon reviewing the literature, I noted several common themes evident across the coaching literature, which include: the value of the coach-coachee relationship, coaching space, feedback, goal setting, listening, powerful questioning, reflection, assessments, and trust (citations for these factors are located in the following table). The common themes uncovered illuminated this study’s coding process as well as contributed to the interview questions developed. A description of these elements is summarized in Table 1.
Table 1

*Core Common Coaching Elements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active</strong></td>
<td>Openly attending to the context of the coaching conversation, noticing what is and is not being stated by the coachee, and clarifying for understanding (Donner &amp; Wheeler, 2009; Evered &amp; Selman, 2001; Gallwey, 2000; IAC, 2010; ICF, 2013; Parsloe &amp; Wray, 2000; Whitmore, 2013).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessments</strong></td>
<td>Serve as a tool for revealing a student’s current academic performance levels, identifying learning styles, increasing a student’s self-awareness, and provides insight for discussion, planning, and goal setting during coaching sessions (ICF, 2013; Parsloe &amp; Wray, 2000; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Whitmore, 2013; Witherspoon &amp; White, 1996).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Element</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaching space</td>
<td>Is created when the coach establishes a safe attentive environment fostering trust, commitment, open communication, appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening and the usage of feedback (Donner &amp; Wheeler, 2009; ICF, 2013; Tschannen-Moran &amp; Tschannen Moran, 2010; Webberman, 2011).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Is the process of helping the coachee increase self-awareness and the coach sharing non-evaluative observations. Evaluative feedback should be used sparingly and with caution (Gallwey, 2000; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Parsloe &amp; Wray, 2000; Whitmore, 2013; Witherspoon &amp; White, 1996).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>Ongoing process enabling and empowering the coachee by focusing on designing solutions and the process to attain them through the development of an academic plan. The outcome is to forecast how to enhance academic, personal, or professional growth (Donner &amp; Wheeler, 2009; IAC, 2010; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Whitmore, 2013).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Element</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Powerful questioning</td>
<td>Draws from appreciative inquiry using positive open-ended questions focused on the coachee’s strengths to help them express thoughts, feelings, or perspectives. The outcome is for the coachee to build a map for future life goals and determine how to overcome obstacles (Donner &amp; Wheeler, 2009; Gallwey, 2000; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Parsloe &amp; Wray, 2000; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Tschannen-Moran &amp; Tschannen Moran, 2010; Webberman, 2011; Whitmore, 2013; Witherspoon &amp; White, 1996).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>The process of having the coachee step back, make an observation of what has transpired, think through of how to improve, learn, and/or grow (Gallwey, 2000; NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Webberman, 2011).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Cultivates the ability to establish a rapport with the coachee whereby value and respect are conveyed. The facets of benevolence, competence, honesty, openness, and reliability are the crux of its formation (Donner &amp; Wheeler, 2009; Evered &amp; Selman, 2001; Gallwey, 2000; IAC, 2010; ICF, 2013; Tschannen-Moran &amp; Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Webberman, 2011).</td>
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</table>

Arguably, mentoring, academic advising, and academic coaching all provide some form of support for college students. Table 2 provides the distinction between these constructs based on their overarching goals of support.
Table 2

*Dimensions of Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Overarching Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Advising</strong></td>
<td>A process whereby students are taught how to become members of the college community, understand their role and institutional expectations, and learn to become an educated contributing member to society (NACADA, 2006; Webberman, 2011).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>A process whereby a more experienced individual possessing content specific expertise teaches the content to a novice (Donner &amp; Wheeler, 2009; Hayes &amp; Kalmakis, 2007; ICF, 2013; Parsloe &amp; Wray, 2000; Whitmore, 2013).</td>
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Within the context of the college campus, all three dimensions of support are present and serve a vital role in student services personnel. For the purposes of this study, it focused
on the prong of academic coaching employed by Success Coaches in the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative program.

Coaching Guidelines

The insurgence of the modern professional coaching movement in the late 1980s, and the nascent use of academic coaching created a need for guidelines and protocols. As a result of increased global demand for professional coaching, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) was established in 1995. Subsequently, the founding of the International Association for Coaching (IAC) further supplemented the professional coaching movement by instituting a code of ethics, ethical principles, and coaching standards (IAC, 2010, 2011). Recently, in response to this growing movement and use of coaching in higher education, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) posited their concept of academic coaching. NACADA specifically sought to create a definition encompassing historic academic advising functions and the newly proposed objectives for academic coaches (NACADA, 2014). One of the goals of this study is to learn whether practitioners in the field make distinctions between advising and coaching in their roles with students.

International Coaching Federation

The International Coaching Federation established in 1995 by Thomas Leonard is a leading worldwide non-profit organization dedicated to advancing a professional coaching community (ICF, 2013). ICF posits that “professional coaching focuses on setting goals, creating outcomes and managing personal change” (IFC, 2013, para. 5) and is distinctly different from therapy, consulting, mentoring, training, and athletic development. Yet, the ICF recognized that the range of these professional services and
coaching are often blurred (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; Webberman, 2011). To help provide clarity and definition to professional coaching, the ICF established core competencies illuminating coaching skills and approaches whereby a professional coach can:

1. [Set] the foundation [by] meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards [and establish] the coaching agreement
2. Co-create the relationship [by] establishing trust and intimacy with the client [and the] coaching presence
3. Communicate effectively [by] active listening, powerful questioning, [and] direct communication
4. Facilitate learning and results [by] creating awareness, designing actions, planning and goal setting, [and] managing progress and accountability (ICF, 2013, para. 3).

With the growing need for coaches within an array of fields and specializations, ICF provides an accredited curriculum program to bolster “consistency among coaching professionals” (ICF, 2013, para. 16). What I hope to discern in this study was whether VCCS utilized ICF’s curriculum program for equipping Success Coaches or provided the coaches with a different specialized training. The ICF guidelines informed the core common coaching elements, the construction of interview questions, and the coding process for analysis.

International Association of Coaching

As the industry demand for coaching increased, Leonard recognized the need for advancing professional coaching standards (IAC, 2010). Consequently in 2003, Leonard
developed the International Association of Coaching (IAC). Operating as an independent certifying entity, the IAC developed nine coaching masteries to undergird effective and observable professional coaching standards. By doing so, these masteries are understood globally and are measureable (IAC, 2010). As an evaluation tool for professional coaching, the nine mastering encompass a coaches' ability to:

1. Establish and maintain a relationship of trust...
2. Perceive, affirm, and expand the client’s potential...
3. Engage in active listening...
4. Process in the present...
5. Express communication effectively...
6. Clarify uncertainties to... increase client’s understanding...
7. Help the client set and keep clear intentions...
8. Invite possibility for ideas to occur...
9. Help the client create and use supportive systems and structures (IAC, 2010, p. 1-4)

To further establish professional coaching standards, IAC developed a code of ethics (IAC, 2011). This document served as the framework to inform professional coaching practices. The three overarching purposes woven into this code are to:

1. Provide the broad principles and values to which coaches subscribe... including confidentiality and... concern for clients’ welfare and success...
2. Provide rules for coaches to employ in array of... situations... encountered...

To buttress the code of ethics, IAC established a set of ethical principles (IAC, 2010). The principles set forth to guide professional coaches conduct are “competence, integrity, non-discrimination, professional responsibility, respect for people’s rights and dignity” (IAC, 2011, para. 1-9). The existence of multiple codes, competencies, and principles can create confusion in practice. There is a clear distinction between a professional certified coach and applying coaching principles and techniques to promote professional or personal competencies (Donner & Wheeler, 2009). What I hope to discover is how the VCCS College Success Coaches understand their roles as coaches relative to these ranges of identified coaching characteristics.

National Academic Advising Association

Within the past decade, academic coaching has emerged as the “newest subsection of life and business coaching” (Webberman, 2011, p. 20). Recently, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) has established an “advising and academic coaching interest group” (NACADA, 2014, para. 1). The outlined objectives are to “develop a definition combing advising and coaching; provide resources...to enhance coaching abilities; develop a listserve for members...[regarding] current trends; [and] create partnerships with organization that focus on different aspects of coaching” (NACADA, 2014, para. 1). To this end, NACADAs revolutionary approach purports “coaching and advising can be intertwined to increase the chances for students to be successful – in college and in life” (NACADA, 2014, para. 1). Yet, this new construct of academic coaching remains largely unexamined in the field.
Given NACADA’s recently purported ideology of coalescing coaching and advising, has positioned them to be diametrically opposed to the existing coaching organizations, ICF and IAC, and other emerging academic coach’s that clearly delineate the institutional function and role of academic advising and academic coaching are distinctly different (IAC, 2010, 2011; ICF, 2013; Webberman, 2011). To generate greater cohesiveness within postsecondary academia, academic coaching is in dire need of an established “set [of] standards, [guidelines], ethics, and best practices” (Webberman, 2011, p. 20). The lack of a singular, codified language for academic coaching has raised the issue of multiple and perhaps competing definitions of the term in use by practitioners. What I plan to explore is how Success Coaches defined their role and if there is a distinction between academic advising and academic coaching occurring.

Coaching Research in Higher Education

As scant research exists on coaching in the higher education landscape (Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007), this section highlights the four identified studies addressing coaching in the higher education sector (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Brown-O’Hara, 2013; Franklin & Franklin, 2010; Field, Parker, Sawilowsky, & Rolands, 2010).

While research is thin, the following studies commence the conversation of coaching’s utility as it seeks to find residency within the higher education realm. A study conducted by Bettinger and Baker (2011) examined the impact of a student coaching experiment involving a randomly selected group of students who received coaching versus those in the group that did not. The coaching was provided to the control group of students by Inside Track, an independent provider, established in 2000. The regular coaching sessions were set up to help students develop goal setting, skill building such as
study skills, time management, and self-advocacy. Data were collected from Inside Track and examined over two academic school years. In total, 17 studies from eight participating universities totaling 13,555 students were used to generate the data. The results indicated retention and completion rates were higher for the coached group. The limitations noticed were this publication is a working paper and has not been peer-reviewed or reviewed by the National Bureau of Economic Research. It is unknown from this study if any community colleges were participating institutions and if so indicating their institutional type, how institutional retention or recruitment strategies may have influenced outcomes, or what the diversity and underrepresented student status was of participants.

Another study conducted by Franklin and Franklin (2012) examined the effectiveness of two co-coaching programs on students’ academic performance 12 months and 18 month after program completion. The two co-coaching methods used were a Preparation, Action, Adaptive Learning (PAAL) coaching program and a Self-regulation coaching program. A total of 52 first-year university students were randomly assigned to either the seven-week PAAL coaching group, the Self-regulation coaching group, or a control group. Both coaching groups received a self-regulating co-coaching workbook that addressed “making the transition to university, goal setting, time management, study skills, note taking, reading and comprehension, exam preparation and managing stress and anxiety” (Franklin & Franklin, 2012, p. 35). Additionally, the PAAL group was also provided with materials to assist...in clarify[ing] their current study skill set, identify[ing] their ultimate objective, undertak[ing] a cost-benefit analysis concerning the achievement of this
objective, identify[ing] and remov[ing] any barrier to change...identify[ing] the 
skills necessary for success, and...understand[ing] how these skills translated into 
goals (Franklin & Franklin, 2012, p. 35).

Prior to participants pairing off with one of their group members, three co-coaching 
training sessions were conducted. Afterwards, participants in the PAAL and Self-
regulated groups met weekly for co-coaching meetings with their partner.

The results of this low-cost coaching intervention indicated participants in both 
co-coaching programs experienced an increase with academic performance; however, the 
PAALs group achieved significantly higher academic marks at both measured intervals 
of 12 months and 18 months after program completion. Limitations to this study include 
its small sample size, participants being selected from a solicited volunteer group, 
coaching was conducted by a novice rather than a certified coach, and lack of information 
of the Australian institution’s retention strategies. Moreover, there was no evidence of 
student diversity or of underrepresented students. It remains unknown if similar coaching 
strategies would have a similar effect at a community college in the United States.

The study conducted by Field, Parker, Sawilowsky, and Rolands (2010) over a 
two year period examined the effects of employing the Edge coaching model on 
academic success to 110 college students identified with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity 
Disorder (ADHD). The participating institutions were eight universities and two 
community colleges from varying geographic regions across America. Students were 
randomly assigned to either the coached group or the control group.

Edge coaches assisted students in “scheduling, goal setting, confidence building, 
organizing, focusing, prioritizing, and persisting at tasks” (Field et al., 2010, p. 10).
Participants were also given a pre/post Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) which "measures Executive Functioning Skills as they are applied in academic environments...and is comprised of three cluster scores: Self-regulation, Skill and Will" (Field et al., 2010, p. 3). The quantitative results indicated the treatment group gain score was significant. The qualitative results based interviews corroborated the quantitative findings. Students indicated greater self-regulation and positive feelings. Typically, ADHD students experience difficulties with such matters. Limitations of this study were focusing solely on student's learning process. With coaching being considered a tool to increase student persistence, expanding the coaching intervention to encompass student's grade point averages (GPAs) and retention is needed. Furthermore the institutional type for the participating community colleges is unknown, the number of community college student participants is unknown, and the degree of student diversity and underrepresented student population was not indicated.

The final study reviewed here regarding coaching research in college settings was conducted by Brown-O'Hara (2013). This research examined the impact of academic coaching on baccalaureate nursing students. It specifically "explore[d] the relationships among the students' academic success; perceptions of the academic coaching relationship; perceived NCLEX-RN exam readiness; and NCLEX-RN exam success" (Brown-O'Hara, 2013, p. vi). The eight-week academic coaching intervention was conducted with 51 students enrolled in their senior year. Due to the academic rigor of the nursing curriculum, academic coaching consisted of "study skills, goal setting, and evaluation of the need for referral. It also focus[ed] on the coach providing support to students struggling" (Brown-O'Hara, 2013, p. 69). The results indicated there were not
statistical significant differences between any of the explored categories and the application of academic coaching. The limitations of this study are the small sample size, coaching being mandated based upon students not passing an exit exam, and the inclusion of all faculty providing coaching. This approach, does not lend itself to establishing the coaching space (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Webberman, 2011).

Although the findings from these studies conducted provided an entry into examining the role of coaching in academia, they have yet to barely scratched the surface of coaching now occurring within four-year universities and community colleges. Regrettably, examination of academic coaching in the community college sector, specifically in the rural community college sector is virtually non-existent. Moreover, the studies reviewed did not indicate participation of URP.

Pointedly, since underserved students are disproportionally concentrated in the two-year sector identifying promising practices promoting URP student persistence to degree attainment is compelling (Brint & Karabal, 1989; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Fike & Fike, 2008; Lovell, 2007; McClenney, 2004; McClenney et al., 2007; Rosenbaum et al., 2007). Rural community colleges in particular require additional study given their majority status among the community college sector and their location in communities with high levels of poverty and low college attainment levels (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014; Eddy, 2007; Katsinas, 2007; VCCS, 2012a, b). Finally, President Obama's academic goal of 5 million additional college graduates by 2020 is rapidly approaching and the results from the studies reviewed are not generalizable to the community college (Obama, 2009a, 2009b). In this study, I sought to
unearth the process of academic coaching with URP in the rural community college setting and identify promising practices resulting from the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative from the Success Coaches’ perspective. Moreover, I sought to expand the breath of research regarding academic coaching, specifically in the rural community college setting and the underrepresented student population that they serve.

Summary

Community colleges are a core element within the composition of the American higher education landscape. Yet, the rhetoric on community colleges often does not include the important function of rural community colleges to the efforts of addressing the national call to action of increased college completion (Achieve, 2012; Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Bailey et al., 2003; Laanan, 2001; McPhail, 2011; Obama, 2009a, 2009b; Russell, 2011). Rural community colleges are located in regions of the country hardest hit by the recession and are home to persistent pockets of poverty. Recognizing the importance of lifting up college completion rates in the rural crescent of the state, the VCCS implemented the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative in 2012 (VCCS, 2012a).

As the review of literature highlighted, coaching is relatively a recent phenomenon in higher education and as a result is not often clearly distinguished from academic advising, academic coaching, or mentoring (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; ICF, 2013; Gallwey, 2000; Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; NACADA, 2006; Parsloe & Wray, 2000; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Stober, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Webberman, 2011; Whitmore, 2013). For the purposes of this study, the construct of academic coaching is defined as a collaborative relationship between the
Success Coach and the student, wherein the coach used conversation to help the student increase self-awareness and achieve established academic goals. Also, within this relationship, the coach used assessments, reflection, and feedback to aid the student in maximizing potential (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; Gallwey, 2000; Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Stober, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Webberman, 2011; Whitmore, 2013).
Chapter 3: Methodology

"We give everyone the opportunity to learn and develop the right skills so lives and communities are strengthened" (VCCS, 2014c, para. 1)

The purpose of this formative evaluation study was to explore and understand the Success Coaches’ experiences with the underrepresented population (URP) of student participants involved in the VCCS program. The goals of this study were to provide an evaluation of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative (CCSCI) and identify elements of promising practices based on perceptions of the college Success Coaches at the nine participating rural community colleges. The study focused on discovering how Success Coaches achieved the initiative’s goals, how the Success Coaches defined their roles of academic advising and academic coaching, and what elements the Success Coaches perceived promoted student success. The essence of the CCSCI intended program outcomes are grounded in the use of Success Coaches as an intervention in promoting student persistence to attainment, along with garnering promising practices that could be harnessed for the individual institutions’ benefit and potentially other colleges within the VCCS (VCCS, 2012a).

This chapter provides the methodology used in this study. Herein, I provide reasoning for employing qualitative methods within program evaluation followed by explaining the decision to use a case study design as a primary method for garnering the Success Coaches’ perceptions. Next, the research questions are restated followed by the qualitative research paradigm. Afterwards, I presented my role as a researcher and the bounding of this study is delineated. I review the theoretical lens along with a description of the study’s conceptual framework and the logic model employed. The remainder of the chapter explicates the unit of analysis and the data collection procedures, which
included the pilot study, the field study, the sampling process, the participants, the
evaluator standards and guideline procedures, and data analysis. The chapter concludes
by outlining delimitations and limitations and summarizing the chapter.

**Qualitative Methods in Program Evaluation**

In order to answer the overarching research questions posed, qualitative research
methods were deemed most appropriate. Quantitative survey methods are limited to a
snapshot held by an identified population at a given moment (Creswell, 2007; Denzin &
Lincoln, 2005), yet the deeper explanations as to the *how* and *why* individuals held those
views are left unexplored. In fact, "program evaluation is a major site of qualitative
research" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 26). A qualitative evaluation allowed me to delve
more deeply because I wanted to understand more fully the Success Coaches’ perceptions
and approaches about how and why they provided support for students.

Qualitative research permits a deeper understanding within a context of case study
case study is a qualitative approach studying an issue within a bounded system (case),
such as a setting or context. Additionally, usage of qualitative methods permits the story
to be told and shared through the coaches’ voices (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).
Moreover, this approach allows for a richer understanding of how their perceptions are
formed and feelings are experienced (Patton, 1987). These outcomes are achieved when
due to the researcher’s ability to ask more probing, detailed questions to better “captur[e]
the [coaches’] point of view” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12). As a result, the weaving
of the story is told in such a way that the picture painted permits the reader to feel
immersed in the middle of the study (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).
For the purposes of this study, a formative qualitative evaluation provided the needed descriptive information regarding "the program's strengths and weaknesses...[and] perceptions of...program staff," specifically the Success Coaches (Patton, 1987, p. 29). As a valuable tool for improving programs, formative qualitative evaluations are conducted during "the early stages of a program when there is likely to be a great deal of development and change" (Patton, 1987, p. 29). Subsequent "feedback about program processes and effect on program participants [is vital]" (Patton, 1987, p. 29) to program improvements. Additionally, application of a "process evaluation strategy" (Patton, 1987, p. 28) within a formative qualitative evaluation "emphasizes how a product or outcome is produced rather than looking at the product itself" (Patton, 1987, p. 23). This form of evaluation study focuses on processes, in this case regarding the new initiative of the Success Coaches from the coaches' perspective. Given that program funding was extended an additional two years, a formative evaluation of the CCSCI at this juncture proved prudent.

Study Design

The study's design examined the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative from the Success Coaches' perspective and used a collective case study design nested in a program evaluation framework. Qualitative methods provided the means for the identification and reporting out of the Coaches' voices and perspectives (Creswell, 2007). This approach "has all the elements of a good story" (Patton, 2002, p. 10) as it provides the needed "depth and detail...to capture the richness of [the Success Coach's] experiences in their own terms" (Patton, 1987, pp. 9-10). A case study design nested in a program evaluation framework was employed with each participating college, with each
campus representing a separate case. Moreover, a case study’s merit rests in its inquiry of “how” the Success Coaches sought to achieve the goals of the CCSCI, identifying elements perceived to foster student success, and focusing on the contemporary events of the VCCS discovering best practices (Yin, 2009). Moreover, the CCSCI is focused on contemporary events as the program is related to identifying best practices which can be scaled up to other community colleges promoting transformative change (VCCS, 2012a).

As a result, the CCSCI program was conducted at the nine smallest of the 18 rural community colleges within the VCCS (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014). The participating rural VCCS institutions represent a bounded system further justifying application of a collective case study design (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009).

Research Questions

The following research questions undergirding this evaluation study were anchored in the VCCS’s desired CCSCI’s programmatic updated outcomes:

1. How did the Success Coaches achieve the three updated goals outlined by the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative?

Within this question, were the following two sub-questions:

a. What supports were evident to the coaches that helped in the task of achieving goals?

b. What challenges were evident to the coaches that hindered goal achievement?

2. What elements of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative did the coaches perceive supported student success?
3. How do the Success Coaches' perceived program strengths that supported student success align with emerging literature on academic coaching?

**Qualitative Research Paradigm**

The strategy of inquiry informing qualitative research is grounded in a researcher's "paradigm or worldview" in which reality exists (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). This framework is undergirded by the researcher's fundamental belief system and informed meaning making (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). For the purposes of this study, I used a constructivist approach (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Williamson, 2006). The basic tenet of a constructivist approach is exploring and discovering a greater "understanding of the world in which [others] live and work" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). In essence, it is the development of "transactional knowledge" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 184). Throughout this meaning making and interactional process, the reliance on constructing knowledge is predicated on the participants' perspective (Creswell, 2007, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Williamson, 2006). The nature of the constructive approach lends to using a case study and program evaluation designs to examine the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative program (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Using an interpretivist paradigm, I sought to "investigate constructions or meanings about broad concepts...[centered on] specific issues or ideas," such as URP student success at designated VCCS rural community colleges (Williamson, 2006, p. 85). As data were collected, the context mattered "as the researcher listen[ed] carefully to what... [participants] sa[id] or d[id]" (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Thus, I paid attention to how the coaches discussed their roles and what they perceived most influenced student
outcomes. Essential criteria for evaluating research were data that was “trustworth[y],
credibl[e], transferabl[e], [and] confirmable” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). These
elements permitted for triangulation to occur, which is addressed later in this chapter.

Researcher's Role

Within qualitative research, my role as the researcher served as the primary
medium in the data collection and analysis process for the formative program evaluation
of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative program (Creswell, 2007; Denzin
& Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 1987). As the primary medium, I personally conducted all
interviews and during the interviews facilitated the elaboration and clarification of the
coaches’ responses. Additionally, I reviewed pertinent program documents as part of the
evaluation process (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). To this end, I collected and
analyzed all data collected from Success Coaches’ interviews and program documents
received. Lastly, throughout the entire evaluation process, I kept a focus on learning the
meaning that the Success Coaches hold about the Chancellor’s College Success Coach
Initiative program, as it is their story I sought to give voice to (Creswell, 2007).

My interest in this program evaluation study was shaped by my family’s strong
belief and value system rooted in the benefits of a postsecondary education and the
expectation to reach back and help others attain the same. As an undergraduate student
attending Hampton University, I served in the capacity of a tutor for the Student Support
Services program, which is a prong of the TRIO program targeted to assist first-
generation, low-income, and minority students with degree attainment. As a result of
wanting to continue assisting students in achieving their educational goals, I entered the
secondary public school system, where for over 19 years I have worked as a middle
school counselor supporting students in developing academic and career goals.

Recently during my tenure as a doctoral student attending the College of William
and Mary, I became familiar with the educational role of community colleges, which has
since captivated my passion for assisting students, particularly underserved students,
which society has often discounted. Evidence of URP marginalization is reflected by the
current dearth of research pertaining to the community college sector and URP (Bailey &
Alfonso, 2005; Bailey & Morest, 2006; Pascarella, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005;
Tinto & Pusser, 2006). To this end, throughout my study I sought to give voice to the
Success Coaches working with underrepresented student populations to identify best
practices bolstering student completion (VCCS, 2012a).

Bounding the Study

The VCCS is the overarching bounded system in this study (Creswell, 2007). Within
the context of the VCCS, there are a total of 23 community colleges, 18 of which
are considered rural (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2014;
VCCS, 2012a). Moving inward, the next layer of this system impacted by the CCSCI
consisted of the nine smallest of the 18 rural institutions. These nine colleges created the
studies bounded system wherein each participating college represented a separate case
and was the object of this study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; VCCS, 2012a). The
participating institutions include: Dabney S. Lancaster, Eastern Shore, Mountain Empire,
Patrick Henry, Paul D. Camp, Rappahannock, Southwest Virginia, Virginia Highlands,
and Wytheville (VCCS, 2012a). Since the locations of the participating rural community
colleges serve distinct rural areas and span the breadth of Virginia, the following chapter
provides a brief overall case description of the participating campuses.
Theoretical Lens

The theoretical lens applied in this study was change theory. Kotter and Cohen (2002) outlined a change model that includes an eight step process. The steps included in this eight step process are explicated in Table 3 below:

Table 3

Eight Stages of Successful Large-Scale Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>New Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Increase urgency</td>
<td>People start telling each other, “Let’s go, we need to change things!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Build the guiding team</td>
<td>A group powerful enough to guide a big change is formed and they start to work together well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Get the vision right</td>
<td>The guiding team develops the right vision and strategy for the change effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Communicate for buy-in</td>
<td>People begin to buy into the change, and this shows in their behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Empower action</td>
<td>More people feel able to act, and do act, on the vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Create short-term wins</td>
<td>Momentum builds as people try to fulfill the vision, while fewer and fewer resist change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Don’t let up</td>
<td>People make wave after wave of changes until the vision is fulfilled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Make change stick</td>
<td>New and winning behavior continues despite the pull of tradition, turnover of change leaders, etc. (p. 7).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68
This change model provided an opportunity in this formative evaluation to determine, which, if any, of the steps had occurred to date. I chose this change model over others because Kotter and Cohen's (2002) approach is written with organizational leaders in mind. It provides a holistic approach with a step-by-step process for organizational leaders to follow and bring about the desired change. The core tenant of the model is centered on "changing the behavior of people... by helping them to see a truth to influence their feelings" (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 2). I believe when a leader can touch and change the heart of the people, not through manipulation but rather by providing a mental picture of the need for change that it impacts the way an organization functions and the outcomes it produces.

American higher education, specifically the community college sector, is experiencing "large-scale change" (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 3). The sense of urgency and pressure to embrace change with an all hands on deck approach is reverberating throughout the community college sector and the nation at large (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). To operationalize a sense of urgency, Kotter and Cohen's (2002) use of a leader painting a mental picture as a visual tool "evokes a visceral response" (p.11) leading to a change in behavior, wherein members of the organization work "much harder to make a good vision reality" (p. 11). The CCSCI intends to change support structures on rural campuses to support URP better and understanding how this occurred using the steps of this change model can provide leadership with better information on the best levers for change. The CCSCI intends to change support structures on rural campuses to support URP better and understanding how this occurred using the steps of this change model can provide leadership with better information on the best levers for change.
The Virginia Community College System, like other community colleges around the country, is embracing a range of change efforts (Kotter & Cohen, 2002; McClennen et al., 2007). The Chancellor has argued that there is a need to shore up student persistence and attainment, specifically at its smaller rural colleges (VCCS, 2012a). Part of this argument expounds upon the potential state impacts if change does not occur (VCCS, 2012a), thereby raising the urgency to act (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). A review of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative program shows alignment with Kotter and Cohen’s (2002) change theory as the program has implemented stages one (Increase urgency) and two (Build the guiding team) through the Chancellor’s targeted focus on the challenges Virginia’s rural community colleges are experiencing in the area of student persistence to attainment and implementing an initiative. Currently, the program appears to be between stages three (Get the vision right) and four (Communicate for buy-in) as the initial two years of the program ended. Recently, the CCSCI received funding for an additional two year period. At this juncture, conducting a formative program evaluation may move VCCS into stages five (Empower action) and six (Create short-term wins) as the study sought to identify how the Success Coaches achieved the goals outlined in the initiative and elements from the Success Coaches’ perspective promoted student success.

Conceptual Framework

The logic model undergirding this formative program evaluation concentrated on understanding “how” the academic coaching process of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative worked versus an evaluation of the outcomes (See Figure D). As the framework for my program evaluation, the logic model was informed by the existing literature regarding student engagement and persistence (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Bailey
& Morest, 2006; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), the professional coaching field (Gallwey, 2000; IAC, 2010; ICF, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Whitmore, 2013), the nascent academic coaching field (NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011), and Tinto and Pusser’s (2006) Institutional Action Model. The elements of the logic model (located in Figure D) indicate when student-centered focused institutional activity occurs through academic coaching, change occurs resulting in the student outcomes of engagement, learning, and persistence. This model creates a visual representation of the potential outcome when an institution embraces the change theory outlined above. Where the two differ is that change theory has a broader organizational focus, whereas the logic model is student oriented.

Students are at the heart of my conceptual framework. A student-centered approach, nests the student within the support sphere that consists of overlapping elements of goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection (NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011). The first sphere is self-assessment. Self-assessment involves determining a baseline of “the student’s current study habits, strengths, [and] levels of engagement” and serves as a launching point for coaching sessions (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 27) and for a location to promote students’ self-awareness (NACADA, 2014). The second sphere is goal setting. Goal setting is an ongoing process enabling and empowering the student by focusing on designing solutions and the process to attain them through the development of an academic plan. The outcome is to forecast how to enhance academic, personal, or professional growth (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; IAC, 2010; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Whitmore, 2013). The
third sphere is reflection. The reflection process entails the student stepping back, making an observation of what has transpired, thinking through of how to improve, learn, and/or grow (Gallwey, 2000; NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Webberman, 2011).

The underpinnings for the success of this student-centered conceptual framework, is the collaborative partnership between the coach and the student (NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011). The collaborative partnership is promoted by the coach’s ability to embody the essential attributes of honesty, openness, competence, benevolence, and reliability (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). These attributes help foster the coaching space (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). Assumed within this space is a safe attentive environment fostering trust, rapport, commitment, open communication, appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, and the usage of feedback (Gallwey, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Whitmore, 2013). Moreover, the coaching space permits the coach to engage in powerful questioning exchanges with students (Gallwey, 2000; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Parsloe & Wray, 2000; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen Moran, 2010; Webberman, 2011; Whitmore, 2013). Based upon the literature reviewed, the use of these coaching strategies contributes to the development of a student’s academic plan which may further the short-term outputs of learning, persistence, engagement, and in turn may influence the long-term outcome of degree attainment.
Figure G: Logic Model
Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was the CCSCI program (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1987, 2002). Examining program units holistically is a notable strength of qualitative analysis (Patton, 1987, 2002). Selecting the CCSCI program as the unit of analysis, the primary focus of data collection was on uncovering information about the program, what is working, what challenges exists, and areas needing improvement. Furthermore, this unit of analysis informed “decisions about samples – both sample size and sampling strategies” (Patton 1987, p. 50). Since the Success Coaches are at the core of this program and served as the intervention promoting student success, their perspective was the bedrock for examining the program. The outcomes from this study can provide VCCS and the coaches with relevant information for program adjustments for the second round of funding.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to obtain an in-depth degree of understanding from participants, this study used multiple data sources. The protocols for these data collections (documents and interviews) are located in Appendix C. This section describes the pilot study, field study, process of obtaining participants, and the two sources used for data collection.

Pilot Study

After the Success Coach’s interview questions were created, a pilot study was conducted during the summer term of 2014 with three local High School Career Coaches. High School Career Coaches are employees of the Virginia Community College System based in local high schools to promote students’ career discovery and knowledge regarding postsecondary educational and program options (VCCS, 2014b). As a resource
empowering students to make informed career and educational decisions, their roles mirror that of Success Coaches. As a result, these individuals were selected based on their expertise in working with students on the cusp of graduating and seeking either attendance at a community college or other postsecondary programming (VCCS, 2014b).

The potential Career Coaches were sent an invitational letter which introduced me, the study, and their role as a pilot study participant (See Appendix D) as well as a consent form (See Appendix E). Once confirmation of participation was received along with the signed consent form, the pilot study participants were emailed the interview questions (See Appendix F). Afterwards, meetings were held with pilot participants individually to discuss the interview questions' content and format as their schedules did not permit for a focus group setting as originally planned. Based upon feedback received, the interview questions were modified to promote clarification and direction of questions presented.

Field Study

After the pilot study was completed, a field study of the interview questions was conducted with a recent doctoral recipient who was knowledgeable regarding the community college sector. An invitational letter which introduced me, the study, and their role as a field study participant (See Appendix G) along with a consent form (See Appendix H) was sent. Upon acceptance, this process entailed conducting a full mock interview. Once the interview was completed a debriefing was held. During this time, feedback on the interview questions was provided as well as suggestions for improving the interview process. As a result, interview questions were further modified to promote clarification and direction of questions presented. The final interview questions are
located in Appendix E. Furthermore, to ensure alignment with the research questions, a cross walk table was created (Appendix M).

**Sampling and Participants**

In 2012, the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative was implemented at the nine smaller rural community colleges in the VCCS (VCCS, 2012a). Each campus has two College Success Coaches. In order to garner a holistic viewpoint from the Success Coaches, an invitation was extended to all 18 coaches for participation in my study (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002), because it is the coaches who can supply the best information about the initiative (Creswell, 2007). The coaches’ vantage points provided the needed landscape for understanding the implementation of the initiative, what worked, what did not work, and what program adjustments to consider at the ground level (Patton, 1987, 2002). This study permitted understanding the CCSCI through the coaches’ eyes, an insider perspective that was yet to be fully tapped.

Participant selection began by first sending an invitation letter to participate via email to all Success Coaches, which introduced me, the study, and their role as a participant (See Appendix I). Also attached was my IRB approval letter (See Appendix J) and Participant Consent Form (See Appendix K). My hope was to recruit at least one coach from each campus. I did not include the program administrators as participants because of the focus of this study, which was the coaches’ perspective and their role in the CCSCI. Administrators would not be the best sources to inform me on this topic as they do not serve the targeted student population in the same capacity of the Success Coaches (Creswell, 2007).
Unfortunately, no coaches responded to this invitation to participate in the study. As a result, a white paper was crafted and sent to the VCCS coordinator of the CCSCI further explaining the study and seeking support to connect with the Success Coaches. At the end of the summer 2014 term, the VCCS coordinator of the CCSCI, the doctoral advisor, and I met to debrief regarding the document and discuss how best to proceed to recruit coaches for participation. An outcome of this meeting resulted in the coordinator reaching out to the program directors at each participating institution whereby the directors were encouraged to speak with the Success Coaches and to promote their participation in this study. Afterwards a second invitation to participate was sent. Despite the involvement of the program director, after 10 days, no coaches had responded.

At this juncture entering the fall 2014 term, a fortuitous opportunity presented itself wherein all of the Success Coaches were slated to attend the annual Workforce Professionals Academy held in the Hampton Roads Area. A few days prior to the conference three coaches responded to the invitation and were sent the demographic survey and the interview questions. I reserved a room on the floor where the coach’s meetings were being held in order to conduct the interviews. I strategically positioned a sign-up table at the top of the escalator and stairwell area with a sign providing explicit directions on selecting an interview time (Appendix N), an interview sign-up sheet (Appendix O), a reminder interview time card indicating their interview date, number selected, time, and location to be taken (Appendix P), and a bowl of mints. Furthermore, located on an easel next to the table was a presentation board with a flyer directing Success Coaches down the walkway to the interview location. The interview space was
designed with a round table and chairs on the edge facing one another. On the table for
the coaches was a laminated copy of the interview questions, a bottle of water, a box of
tissues, and a bowl of mints. Additionally a softly scented air freshener was used to
further foster a welcoming environment. At the close of each interview, each participant
was provided with a $5.00 gift card to Starbucks as a token of appreciation.

During the first day of the conference, I was provided the opportunity to introduce
myself and my study to the coaches in their small group meeting. At the close of that
evening, no additional coaches had signed up for interviews. The following day, I
reached out to the coaches in the meetings I attended and was able to attain additional
interviews. At the close of the conference, I had interviewed eight Success Coaches from
six of the nine participating institutions. In order to extend one last invitation to
participate, coaches who did not interview during the Academy conference were sent
another email invitation. No replies were received, thus a total of eight coaches
participated in this study.

Based on replies, I had a representative sample of Success Coaches with six of the
nine colleges participating in the CCSCI. As a result, there was at least one coach from
each of Virginia's five regions. Moreover, there were coaches original to the inception of
CCSCI program, as well as coaches hired since the program's second round of funding.
At the time of the interview, each coach was asked to select a pseudonym to better ensure
confidentiality. In the end, the selected pseudonyms for the eight coaches were: Brian, C.
T., Fuzz, Mary, Pie, Sarah, Selena, and Sugar Mama.

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**Documents.** Within this study, the documents examined primarily through a change theory framework and at times with an overlay of the conceptual framework when the documents contained coaching elements (when available) were:

1. The Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative (CCSCI) program overview was made available from the VCCS central office.
2. Any training materials (i.e. manuals, videos) made available from the VCCS central office.
3. Preliminary reports made available from the VCCS central office and any from the participating institutions.
4. Internal forms produced and made available by the Success Coaches.

**Interviews.** Prior to conducting interviews, a pilot and field study were carried out to ensure the clarity and suitability of the questions put forth. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Success Coaches to garner their perspective on the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative, how they defined their role, how they promoted student engagement, what has helped promote student success, and what suggestions the would offer to help to better promote student success over the next two year cycle. Arguably, it is the Coaches' "perspectives...[which] are essential for accurate and meaningful reporting" regarding the program's nuances (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, p. 319). As the primary data collection source, the benefit of the open-ended interview structure permitted for in-depth explanations to be gleaned (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009) and "to unravel some of the complexities of the program" (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, p. 318). To that end, I also performed member checking during the interview to ensure the quality of the data gathered was accurate (Creswell, 2007; Stake,
1995; Yin, 2009). Examples of member checking questions included, “What I heard you say was….is that correct?” followed by restating my understanding of their response to ensure the intended data is accurate.

The interviews conducted were approximately 60-90 minutes in duration and were held at the Hampton Convocation Center during the annual Workforce Professionals Academy. All interviews conducted were videotaped, recorded via digital sound recorder, and transcribed verbatim. Unfortunately, the videotape recorder malfunctioned during two interviews, yet the digital sound recorder remained intact. Following the interviews, two additional questions were posed via email to the coaches and are located at the bottom of the interview protocol. Coaches were permitted to respond via email or via phone conversation. All but the part-time coach responded. In an effort to obtain the response, voicemails were left and emails were sent. Acknowledgement was never given. Afterwards, verbatim transcripts of their interview were emailed to each coach. Coaches were provided the opportunity to member check their transcript to ensure what they desired to communicate was accurate and to make any adjustments, deletions, additions, or points of clarity. Subsequently, coaches were requested to email the updated transcript so that any needed adjustments could be made prior to my data analysis. Member checking at both levels, promoted accurate depictions of the Success Coaches’ voice, thoughts, and feelings (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study. The journal permitted my initial thoughts and impressions to be captured after each interview denoting personal
observations of the participants and any details of interest. Moreover, the reflexive journal assisted in further triangulation of the data (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009).

Standards of Program Evaluation

Through the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative formative program evaluation study, I sought to provide relevant, timely, and credible information to VCCS and participating institutions. Couched in a case study design, the evaluation plan was organized in adherence to the Standards for Educational Evaluations developed by the Joint Committee (2011). The Standards for Educational Evaluations (2011) govern the criteria for judging the quality of educational evaluations. The program evaluation standards four-pronged approach is structured around: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Each prong is further defined below:

- **Utility** - ensure[s] that the evaluation will serve the needs of intended users [through timeliness and usefulness]
- **Feasibility** - [reflects practical and] prudent, diplomatic, and frugal
- **Propriety** - [is centered on the] evaluation [being] conducted legal, ethical, [and fair manner]...with due regard for the welfare of [human subjects]
- **Accuracy** - ensure[s]...[the] evaluation [findings are valid and reliable]...so that evaluation questions are effectively answered (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, pp. 90-93).

The practicality of applying this four-pronged structured approach is it enhanced the soundness of the CCSCI program evaluation conducted (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).
The American Evaluation Association (AEA) developed a set of guiding principles to codify the evaluator's behavior (Stufflebeam & Shinfield, 2007). These guiding principles call for evaluators to employ:

- Systematic inquiry – [wherein inquiries are] systematic [and] data-based
- Competence – [wherein evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders]
- Integrity/Honesty – [wherein evaluators display honesty and integrity in their...behavior, and...[throughout] the entire evaluation process
- Respect for People – [wherein evaluators respect the...[confidentiality and] dignity...[of] program participants
- Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare – [wherein evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of general and public interests and values](Stufflebeam & Shinfield, 2007, pp. 96-97).

By upholding the AEA standards, I reinforced the trust being extended by the Success Coaches and promoted their willingness towards transparency. Furthermore, embodiment of the AEA principles aided in the establishing my reputation as a researcher.

Data Analysis

When conducting an analysis of a case study, Creswell (2007) suggested six essential steps for data analysis and representation, which include:

- Create and organize files for data
- Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes
- Describe the case and its context
• Use categor[ies] to establish themes or patterns

• [Make]…interpretations [of the data]

• Present [an] in-depth picture of the case (p. 156-157).

Although codes were drawn from the data (see Appendix Q), I also established a priori codes. These codes were: goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection.

**Triangulation.** In any qualitative study, triangulation is critical, but more so in a case study design as it strengthens case study data (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007; Yin, 2009). Triangulation is “the use of different sources of evidence...on the same set of research questions” (Yin, 2009, pp. 115-116). As a result, “finding[s] or conclusion[s] [are deemed] more convincing and accurate” (Yin, 2009, p. 116). Due to this evaluation being couched in a case study design, when analyzing data and creating meaning it is important to ensure trustworthiness of the findings by having specific elements present. Table 4 below denotes these elements and the methods to attain such (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009).
Table 4

Case Study Design Triangulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trustworthiness of Findings</th>
<th>Methods to Attain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Fidelity of note-taking, consistency of coding, using protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>Triangulation of data, member checking, thick description, clarify research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Triangulation of data, member checking, multiple interviews with subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Reflexive journal, transcripts, audit trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Thick descriptions, purposeful sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Reflexive journal, transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Member checking, peer debriefing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analytical process provides the researcher the space to make meaning from the data. To this end, I was able to report an in-depth picture of what was learned from the case (Creswell, 2007).

Cross-case analysis. This analysis step is employed when a collective case study is conducted, as in the case of this study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Once I extrapolated themes from each case examined, the next step entailed observing themes across the cases and distinguishing similarities and differences among them (Creswell, 2007). Application of this analytical technique strengthened findings and made this study
more robust (Yin, 2009). This step helped to create a holistic picture of common themes amid the participating institutions.

Document analysis. The “examination of existing documents, records, and other appropriate materials...[provided the researcher] information about the program” (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, p. 316). The document analysis was conducted primarily using the change theory framework. At times, an overlay of the conceptual framework was applied when viewing documents with coaching elements denoted. During this process, I took notes focusing on points within the documents that were repeated or emphasized (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007) along with the identification of any reoccurring patterns or themes (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1987, 2002). Data drawn from “document analysis yields excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from records, correspondence, official reports, and open-ended surveys” (Patton, 1987, p. 7). These data were used in conjunction with the codes from the interviews to inform analysis and provided a greater understanding of the CCSCI program and process.

Peer reviewer. In order to promote triangulation, a peer reviewer served in the capacity of a second coder. This individual was a recent doctoral graduate and knowledgeable regarding qualitative research methods. Prior to sending the peer reviewer the transcript, any identifying information was removed. The peer reviewer was provided a clean copy of a transcript and a copy of the code sheet with a description for each code. Afterwards, a debriefing was conducted with the peer reviewer to review the coding of the transcripts to further increase the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the data analysis based on the peer reviewer comments (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2009).
Delimitations and Limitations

Two major benefits reaped from conducting this qualitative study included establishing a much needed baseline and skeletal evaluation framework for the VCCS on the CCSCI. Since the inception of the CCSCI in 2012, neither an external or internal formal evaluation had been conducted. Therefore a qualitative study of this nature was quite timely. To this end, laying a research foundation also assisted the VCCS with more intentional planning to shore up the CCSCI’s programmatic process and a means of looking to harness future identified best practices.

A major limitation was full and honest disclosure of the Success Coaches due to fear of confidentiality being compromised as they are small in number. As a result of this concern, the quality of the information provided might be hampered (Yin, 2009). In order to address these potential limitations and aid participants to be more forthright, I had participants ascribe themselves with a pseudonym for reporting purposes.

Another significant limitation was the willingness of all 18 Success Coaches to participate. Although the researcher provided different interviewing venues to accommodate coaches, reached out via email and in person as well as obtained the support of the VCCS central office, several coaches did not acknowledge the multiple invitations extended.

An additional delimitation was selecting only coaches for participation in this study, not administrators, students, nor faculty of participating students.

Summary

This study sought to understand the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative from the Success Coaches’ perspective. In order to garner this information, a
collective case study design nested in a program evaluation was determined as the best approach. Furthermore, Stake (1995) asserted a case study approach is a useful method for evaluating educational programs. The overarching goal of “[q]ualitative [case study] analysis...[is] to mine and interpret...meaning [from multiple data sources]” (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007, p. 589). As a result, the preceding research questions were used to explore, discover, understand, and give voice to the Success Coaches (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 1987, 2002).
Chapter 4: Campus Descriptions

"The Virginia Community College System functions within the educational community to assure that all individuals in the diverse regions of the Commonwealth of Virginia are given a continuing opportunity for the development and extension of their skills and knowledge through quality programs and services that are financially and geographically accessible" (Puyear, 1987, pg. 72)

During the late 1960s, Virginia's State Board for Community Colleges commissioned the development of a master schema affording its citizenry statewide educational opportunity, which coincided with nationwide efforts to put higher education within the reach of the majority of population (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013). In the end, the state was divided into 23 service areas from which the VCCS was established (Puyear, 1987). In order to provide an image of participating campuses in this study, Chapter Four presents an overview of the nine rural institutions in the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative (CCSCI). The smallest within the VCCS, the nine institutions span the breath of Virginia and are represented in each of the states' five regions. Beginning on one side of the state is the Coastal Region, in which Eastern Shore Community College, Paul D. Camp Community College, and Rappahannock Community College are located. Moving westward into the Piedmont Region is Patrick Henry Community College. Within the Blue Ridge Mountains Region are Virginia Highlands Community College and Wytheville Community College. Contained in the Valley and Ridge Region are Dabney S. Lancaster Community College and Southwest Community College. Extending deep into the Appalachian Plateau resides Mountain Empire Community College. This chapter first gives an outline of the nine participating
institutions in the CCSCI. Each institution's review included a campus description, information regarding the service area, and programing available. The final portion of the chapter provides an overview of the campuses service area data associated with each college.

**Eastern Shore Community College**

Between 1971-1972, Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) began enrolling students under the auspices of the VCCS (Vaughn, 1987). Located in Accomack County on the southern end of the Delmarva Peninsula, the college is situated directly off of U.S. Route 13, which serves as a major corridor for travelers crossing the Chesapeake Bay Bridge going up the coastal area towards Maryland. Across from the railroad tracks in the city of Melfa is a small paved driveway gated by two small white swinging poles intersecting in the middle that serves as the entrance to this institution. Entering the 115-acre campus, there are two one-story brick buildings facing one another. The main building to the right houses "classrooms, laboratories, a bookstore, a lecture hall, administrative offices, occupational trade areas, a student lounge, and a library" (ESCC, 2015, para. 4). Behind the main building is an outdoor sitting area shaded by a large tree with tables and benches.

Across the walkway from the main academic building is the Workforce Development Center. This center opened 2009 and has a large two-story middle section that is flanked by one-story extensions that include "classrooms, computer labs, administrative offices, and a Great Hall" (ESCC, 2015, para. 4). In between these two buildings is a large beautiful sculpture of a golden eagle tilted in mid-soar on top of a base surround by a brick enclosed flowerbed.
Travelling further into the campus, off to the right is a small white building with a one-car garage door and a screened door entrance serving as their GED facility. Behind which there is volleyball net with a tree lined backdrop, whereas off to the left are two basketball hoops flanked by a large metal two bulb lighting system and a tree lined backdrop. Sprinkled about the campus are benches as well as a few additional tables located in the parking lot in front of what appeared to be the maintenance garage area. Although the campus maintains a large lot, the facilities described can be walked in a matter of five to eight minutes.

ESCC service area includes Accomack County and Northampton County (ESCC, 2013). Available to these students are 13 associate degree programs, eight certificate programs, and 11 career study certificate programs (Office of Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2013).

Paul D. Camp Community College

Paul D. Camp Community College main campus is located in Franklin with a satellite campus in Suffolk (PDCCC). Opening in 1971, the Franklin campus is comprised of a light brown one one-story brick building with a thick white concrete border trim around the top of the building meeting the roof line and was built on land donated by Paul D. Camp’s daughters (PDCCC, 2015). Turning off U.S. Highway 58, there is a brief drive winding through an older neighborhood, crossing over a set of railroad tracks, and passing a large white water tower. The main campus is situated on a corner lot across from a Rite-Aid pharmacy, Walgreens pharmacy, and a Sunoco gas station. Also on one side of the campus is a wooded lot and on the other side is the Peanut Growers Cooperative Marketing Association building. Driving onto the campus
is a large parking and to the left is the Workforce Development Center. Continuing straight ahead is the main campus building with a few benches out front on the lawn. Behind the building are learning cottages for the Student Support Services program. Also on the property is a baseball field. Although situated on a large corner lot, the main campus can be walked in approximately 5-10 minutes.

Later in 1995, the Suffolk campus named its one on-story brown brick building after Oliver Kermit Hobbs, Sr. who donated the 67-acres upon which the facility rests (PDCCC, 2015). Turning off of U.S. Highway 58 there is a brief drive through a new housing development and then following into an older housing development. The Hobbs campus is located across from the Naval Exchange Distribution center and next to a YMCA campsite. The campus entrance has a turnabout to pull up to the entrance which has two large benches on either side. This turnabout leads to a large parking lot. At the back of the building is a sitting area comprised of tables and benches facing a wooded space. Although the Hobbs campus is situated on 67-acres, the one one-story facility can be walked in less than five minutes.

PDCCC service area includes cities of Franklin and Suffolk, Southampton County, and Isle of Wight County. It provides eight Associate Degree programs, 37 Career Studies Certificates, and four 1-year certificates (Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, 2014).

Rappahannock Community College

Located in the Coastal Plains Region, Rappahannock Community College (RCC) began educating students in 1971 (RCC, 2015b). The college has two main locations, Glenns campus in Gloucester County and the Warsaw campus in Richmond County. The
service area includes the counties of “Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland” (RCC, 2015a, para. 1). The Glenns campus is situated on a 100-acre wooded lot with nature trails and a pond. Situated on the property is a one one-story building which contains “sports classrooms, labs, a lecture hall, a student lounge” (RCC, 2015a, para. 2). On the exterior, there are picnic areas, volleyball, and a small gazebo.

The Glenns campus was built as a reflection of the Warsaw campus which is situated on 117- acre site (RCC, 2015a). With only one one-story building on each of the campuses, each can be walked in less than five minutes. In addition to these two campuses, RCC has a satellite campus, Kilmarnock, in Lancaster County, as well as off-site facilities at King William County and King George County. Based on student enrollment, RCC maintains the largest student enrollment among the nine CCSCI participating institutions. Program offerings range from college transfer programs, certificates, and career certificates (RCC, 2015b).

**Patrick Henry Community College**

Moving westward across the state, the next region is the Piedmont Region. Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) is situated within this area and is located in Martinsville. In 1971, PHCC joined the VCCS and currently serves city of Martinsville, Henry County, Patrick County, and the southern portion of Franklin County (PHCC, 2015).

The campus is deeply nestled within the community away from the arterial road. This open campus system has a long hilly entrance lined with trees on both sides and light poles with PHCC flags hanging. After a quarter of a mile, the driveway levels out
into a parking lot surround by a number of brick buildings. Beginning to the right and working to the left is a large gymnasium and athletics facility. Behind the gymnasium are tennis courts, a walking path, and a multipurpose field along the tree line. Up the walkway leads to a building which houses student classrooms. Adjacent is the main building housing the business and administrative offices. Located in the back is a small courtyard consisting of tables and benches and the Learning Resource Center. Of note, some of the benches were “memory benches” with the name of someone who had passed. To the left of the administrative building are the fine arts/student center facility and cafeteria. The entrance for the cafeteria is located on the side and has a small outdoor eating area. Up the hill on the left towards the back of the campus is the economic development center. The surrounding perimeter of the campus is lined with trees, and the college sits on 137 acres (PHCC, 2015).

PHCC offers “15 associate degree programs with an additional 20 specializations available within those degree options; 12 certificate programs and more than 40 career studies certificate programs” (PHCC, 2015, para. 2). Additionally, there are four off-campus workforce development centers. Although situated on a large property, walking the campus took approximately 5-10 minutes.

Wytheville Community College

Extending into the Blue Ridge Mountains Region is Wytheville Community College (WCC). The open campus is clearly visible from the interstate and is easily accessible. Entering this campus the expansive athletic fields are to the right with a walking path around the entire 148-acre campus. Continuing down the long winding driveway the six campus building are located on your right. In order to aid navigating the
campus, a marquee displaying the campus map delineated the location and the contents for each building. Four of the six buildings are two-story, with the others a three-story and a one-story. The buildings are in the shape of a "V" with the largest building at the top of the "V." In the middle of the shape are walking paths connecting the buildings lined with lamp poles, and off to the side is a sitting area with tables and benches called the Learning Gardens.

In 1967, WCC became a member of the VCCS. Since that time, it has expanded to two campuses which service "the citizens of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, and Wythe counties, the city of Galax, and the citizens of Virginia" (WCC, 2015a, para. 6). Program offerings range from transfer programs, career-technical, workforce development, and continuing education (WCC, 2015a). Situated on a large property, walking amid the campus buildings took approximately 10-15 minutes.

**Virginia Highlands Community College**

Also located in the Blue Ridge Region, is Virginia Highlands Community College (VHCC) which services the city of Bristol and the counties of Washington and Smyth County (VHCC, 2015b). The college is situated on top of a hill and is visible from the interstate. Also on this 100-acre property is the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center which offers "bachelor, masters, and doctorate degrees through participating Colleges and Universities" (VHCC, 2015c, para. 2). The VHCC campus buildings form a donut shape with a commons area in the middle and a large town clock which chimes on the hour. There are six main buildings on the campus that house administrative offices, learning resource center, mechanical education, nursing education, occupational/technical center, and the instruction/student center. Due to the close
proximity of the buildings, the campus can be walked within approximately 10 minutes. Also down the hill from the main facilities on the campus, is a greenhouse (VHCC, 2015a). Program offerings range from college transfer programs, certificates, and career certificates (VHCC, 2015b).

Dabney S. Lancaster Community College

Further west is Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (DSLCC) which is nestled in the Valley and Ridge Region. The open campus is situated directly off the main road butting up against a beautiful mountainous backdrop. The tree-lined entry of the college has a campus directory posted displaying the six one-story buildings on the property. Surprisingly, one of the buildings is a former armory, which is similar to one of the non-participating institutions. The campus buildings are set back into the property in a “U” shape that includes a spacious front lawn. Walking onto the campus, there are signs outside of each building identifying the name and the contents within. The walkways between the buildings are lined with lamp posts and some benches. Next to one building is a large gazebo surrounded by shrubbery and there is also a sitting area with tables and benches. Approaching the armory/convocation center building is a gathering area surrounded by a number of tall pine trees with picnic tables and benches. Nearby is volleyball net secured in the sand. Out back is a tree farm, sawmill, windmill, tennis courts without nets, and an unmarked baseball field. Compared to other campuses visited, their athletic area was not as well maintained.

The communities served by DSLCC two campuses are “the counties of Alleghany, Bath, Botetourt (northern portion) and Rockbridge; the cities of Buena Vista, Covington, and Lexington; and the town of Clifton Forge” (DSLCC, 2015, para. 1).
Since being added to the VCCS during 1967-1968 (Vaughan, 1987), annual student enroll has increased (DSLCC, 2015). The institution offers 10 degrees (plus 3 specializations), along with 27 certificates and career studies certificates (DSLCC, 2015). Due to the closeness of the buildings, the campus can be walked in 5-10 minutes.

Southwest Virginia Community College

In 1968, Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC), located in Valley and Ridge Region began educating students from the “counties of Buchanan, Dickenson (partial), Russell and Tazewell” (SWCC, 2015c, para. 1). The campus sits on two tiers with the top tier overlooking athletic fields, tennis courts, firearm facility, and walking trails. On the lower level are three buildings one of which is an armory and on the top there are six with an open quad space and a large town clock in the middle which chimes on the hour. The buildings on each tier are close yet walking the multi-tier campus can be done within 10-15 minutes. Program offerings include college transfer programs, technical programs, certificate and diplomas, career studies, and distant learning (SWCC, 2015b).

Mountain Empire Community College

The last college participating in the CCSCI is Mountain Empire Community College (MECC), which extends into the Appalachian Plateau Region. The 95-wooded acre open campus was off the main highway and was built in two tiers preserving the natural terrain (MECC, 2015a). Pulling up the driveway, there was a campus map listing seven buildings, tennis courts, an environmental pond, and a firing range. It also denoted which parking lots were available for students, faculty, handicap, and visitors. At the top of the hill the campus faces a beautiful mountain range that was capped with snow at the
time of my visit. To access the buildings, there were a number of stairways or ramps. Once at the top of the first level there were stairways and a ramp leading to one building. Along this first tier walkway were a number of benches with smoking urns and also a designated smoking area with benches. Walking to the second level were the remaining buildings with covered walkways connecting the buildings. At the entrance of each building was a sign indicating its name and contents. There was also a smoking area on the second level. Although other institutions had smoking urns located about their campus, I did not notice marked smoking areas. Whereas on this campus, there appeared to be more urns and clearly marked dedicated smoking areas provided. Interesting was a building housing a grill food service area with an outdoor covered eating area facing the mountains. This tiered campus can be walked within 8-10 minutes.

MECC service area encompasses Dickenson County, Lee County, Scott County, Wise County and the city of Norton. The program offerings range from college transfer programs, certificates, career certificates, and on-site degree programs (MECC, 2015b).

Following is a summary table (see Table 5) that includes information on all nine colleges. This presentation of demographic information provides a context for understanding better the context of the rural colleges participating in the Chancellor’s initiative.
Table 5

*Participating Institutions Service Area Statistical Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution and Size (Small or Medium)</th>
<th>Overall Population of the County/Region Served</th>
<th>Below Poverty Rate</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Graduation Rate 2008 (within three years) 1st time/FT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESCC – Small</td>
<td>45,553</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>25.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDCCC – Small</td>
<td>147,198</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>26.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCC – Medium</td>
<td>184,072</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>24.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHCC – Medium</td>
<td>141,899</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>24.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCC – Medium</td>
<td>120,381</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>36.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VHCC – Medium</td>
<td>104,496</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>18.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSLCC – Small</td>
<td>99,839</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>30.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWCC – Medium</td>
<td>106,185</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>35.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MECC – Medium</td>
<td>109,338</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>20.09%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Census Data, 2015; SCHEV, 2015a; SCHEV, 2015b)

In looking at the portraits of all the colleges, no distinguishable differences are apparent between the colleges in which coaches participated versus those that did not have any participants.
Summary

Since the late 1960s, Virginia committed to establishing a statewide comprehensive community college system to place affordable postsecondary education within the reach of its citizens in every locale (Puyear, 1987). This change within the higher educational landscape, aligned with the emerging national movement acknowledging higher education should be accessible to the majority of the population (Cohen et al., 2013). With approximately three-fourths of Virginia’s geography being rural (VCCS, 2012b), the five regions of the state was strategically divided into 23 service areas (Puyear, 1987). This chapter provided a portrait of the rural community colleges participating in the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative. This contextual backdrop highlights the demographic context of the communities these institutions serve and provides a glimpse of their physical plant layout. This contextual backdrop aided in understanding the findings from this formative evaluation study that are discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Findings

"...everything they need to succeed for ... college...” Fuzz, Success Coach

As part of a program to provide student supports for persistence in college and completion of a degree, the CCSCI created the role of Success Coaches to serve as a source of intervention. The coaches are employed at nine of the smallest rural institutions. The first two-year cycle of the program concluded in June, 2014, and funding for another two-year cycle (2014-2016) was recently approved. At this juncture in the program, a formative evaluation permits a view from the Success Coaches’ perspective on how they implemented the program on campus, what they identify as supports and challenges, and what they view as the program components that best support student success. The formative feedback of the coaches provides an opportunity to understand better what elements of the CCSCI initiative best serve students participating in the program and creates an opportunity to change program procedures to increase student success.

This study included interview data from eight coaches assigned to six of the nine CCSCI participating institutions. The coaches chose the following pseudonyms: Brian, C. T., Fuzz, Mary, Pie, Sarah, Selena, and Sugar Mama. Of this group, several coaches have served in this capacity since the program’s inception, and some were hired afterwards.

The VCCS change of goals in September 2014 from eight to 10 recast the original listing of goals created in 2012. An overview reflecting the original and revised outcome measures are included in Appendix B. Due to the timing of the interviews, only the data for the 2012-2013 cycle were available. Thus, examination of outcome goals is limited to the first three revised goals as the data for the program’s two year cycle had not been
processed at the time of study. Upon examination, the three goals used to examine the
data were pieced together from the original and September 2014 revision. Below is a
table to reflect these adjustments.

Table 6

Progression of Goal Adjustments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Goals</th>
<th>Revised Goals September 2014</th>
<th>Performance Goals to Assess Coaches October 2014</th>
<th>Program Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of 200 students completing Student Development Course (SDV) in the first semester</td>
<td>% of students enrolled in SDV who successfully complete course</td>
<td>% of 200 students completing Student Development Course (SDV) in the first semester</td>
<td>Reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 200 students placed into developmental courses who complete developmental English requirements within one year</td>
<td>% of students completing developmental English requirements within one year</td>
<td>% of 200 students completing English courses within one year</td>
<td>Reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Goals 2013</td>
<td>Revised Goals September 2014</td>
<td>Performance Goals to Assess Coaches October 2014</td>
<td>Program Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 200 students completing College-Level English and Mathematics</td>
<td>% of students completing developmental math requirements within one year</td>
<td>% of 200 students completing courses within one year</td>
<td>Reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 200 students completing at least 15 credits with 2.5 GPA (for students with 0-5 credits)</td>
<td>% of students completing college-level English</td>
<td>% of 200 students completing college-level English</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 200 students completing at least 30 credits with 2.5 GPA (for students with 6-14 credits)</td>
<td>% of students completing college-level math</td>
<td>% of 200 students completing college-level mathematics</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 200 students earning General Education Certificate or Career Readiness Certificate</td>
<td>% of students completing at least 24 credits with at least 2.5 GPA</td>
<td>% of 200 students completing at least 15 credits with 2.5 GPA (for students with 0-5 credits)</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Goals 2013</td>
<td>Revised Goals September 2014</td>
<td>Performance Goals to Assess Coaches October 2014</td>
<td>Program Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 200 students</td>
<td>% of students earning</td>
<td>% of 200 students</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earning other award</td>
<td>post-secondary, credit-based award</td>
<td>completing at least 30 credits with 2.5 GPA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(for students with 6-14 credits)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 200 students</td>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>% of 200 students</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transferring</td>
<td>graduated or retained</td>
<td>earning General Education Certificate or Career Readiness Certificate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in following term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>% of student graduated</td>
<td>% of 200 student</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or retained in</td>
<td>earning other award</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>% of students</td>
<td>% of 200 students</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transferring to a 4-year institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 2014; VCCS, 2012, p. 2)

For the purpose of this study, I will refer to the goals used to assess the coaches, as the updated goals. I focused on the first three updated goals used by the VCCS. The goals include:
1. % of 200 students completing SDV in first semester
2. % of 200 students enrolling in developmental English who completed developmental English courses within one year
3. % of 200 students enrolling in developmental math who completed developmental math courses within one year (Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 2014).

This qualitative formative program evaluation, which employed a case study design, revealed several findings. To aid in the presentation in this chapter, findings are organized by the three primary research questions. In answering the research questions and presenting the findings, the voices of the coaches are used to render a deep, textured portrayal of the Success Coaches’ experiences in navigating and applying the program practices that the CCSCI sought to employ. The chapter begins with In the mind’s eye revealing the coaches’ perception of the key coaching elements, followed by On the fence indicating the coaches’ perceived program strengths supporting student success and alignment with the academic coaching literature. The next section, Doing and believing presents the findings on how the coaches achieved program goals along with what they perceived supported student success. The findings of the supports and challenges coaches identified in meeting program goals are reviewed in Scaffolding success and Hampering hardships. The chapter comes to a close presenting a summary of the program outcomes for the nine institutions participating in the CCSCI.

In the Mind’s Eye

As noted in earlier chapters, academic coaching is a bourgeoning area in higher education. This section reveals the coaches’ perceptions of its key elements. As the
coaches began to share, three overarching components emerged regarding their views on coaching. The first area was the coach’s role as a communicator and facilitator. Some of the coaches indicated academic coaching is a student-centered approach, and they understood the glue to holding this process together was developing a rapport. Mary expressed, her initial step is “to establish a connection” with the students by “sharing a piece of myself.” As this initial groundwork of “support,” as Selena references building rapport, is laid, it provides the opportunity for targeted conversations to occur where coach’s facilitated student learning as they walked through the goal-setting process. Fuzz relayed this process is based on maintaining the student’s goals first and foremost. Moreover, Sarah, Pie, Sugar Mama relayed coaches facilitate expanding students’ knowledge regarding academic language. The significance of the role of communicator and facilitator was evident as coaches sought to build emotional bonds with their students as well as build the student as an individual who could wield needed knowledge.

The second component of the coaching function was the role to move beyond the naming of a coach to doing the work of a coach. C.T. expressed this as the need for “personal preparedness.” In preparing to do the work of coach, Fuzz shared it entails the ability to step back “looking at the whole picture of what are their challenges, what kind of barriers they’re going to have” and then begin to tap into needed resources. Brian and Mary shared this work is not complete until the coach sees the student walk across the stage at graduation. Coaches understood the value and commitment their work demanded.

The last component of coaching for the participants involved the role of academic advising as a key element. In fact, the first word Pie uttered when defining the key
elements for academic coaching was “advising.” Furthermore, Fuzz indicated registering students for classes was a vital step in this process. Herein, coaches functioning in this capacity did not view it as overstepping boundaries but rather as their responsibility to support students in this fashion. It is here that the blurring of the boundaries between coaching and advising occurred as the coaches were clearly on the fence regarding their responsibilities due to their lack of comprehensive knowledge distinguishing between the two institutional roles.

On the Fence

The line between academic coaching and academic advising is clear in the literature. Yet, the participants in this study often walked a fine line between the two positions. The Success Coaches offered that they saw themselves filling an expanded role on campus to help insure student success. When considering the coaches’ responses, it is clear that their perspectives do not align with the ideals of academic coaching. Academic advising focuses on when “an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter” (Kuhn, 2008, p. 3). Academic direction includes academic program choice, course selection, and scheduling classes (Brown, 2008; NACADA, 2006). Academic coaching, on the other hand, has a different focus.

Academic coaching is a nascent phenomenon within higher education, and as a result there is scant literature on the topic (Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007). Most of the available literature reviewed comes from a four-year institutional context and is drawn from the overarching coaching area. Here, for the purposes of this study, academic coaching is defined as a collaborative supportive relationship using conversation to help
the student increase self-awareness, achieve established academic and personal goals, and maximize potential (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; Gallwey, 2000; Hayes & Kalmakis, 2007; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Stober, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Webberman, 2011; Whitmore, 2013). Below is a table that outlines the central areas in the emergent coaching literature relative to the best practices noted by the Success Coaches. This table showcases how the reality of the position and the tenets of academic coaching align. This table only contains those supports that directly link to the literature.

Table 7

*Supports and Alignment with Coaching*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Supports and Definition</th>
<th>Tenets of Academic Coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic plan</strong></td>
<td>The literature indicates an academic plan is a document that embodies goal setting and self-assessment. It is a strategic roadmap that contains student current abilities, discovers targeted study strategies, identifies challenges, entails course mapping, and making strategic academic goals. This written document aids students in achieving academic and personal goals (NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches used their own template to develop the students’ academic plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions of goal setting and self-assessments occurred, however what was embodied on the written plan varied by institution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Supports and Definition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tenets of Academic Coaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tutoring</strong></td>
<td>Within the literature, students are connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches use the campus resource of tutoring as method of academic support for struggling students.</td>
<td>to academic campus resources to support students attaining their academic goals (NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rapport</strong></td>
<td>According to the literature, rapport is established through building trust with the student whereby value and respect are conveyed. It further enhances the quality of the coach-coachee relationship (Gallwey, 2000, IAC, 2010; ICF 2013; NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Tschannen-Moran &amp; Tschannen Moran, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches developed a rapport with students by conveying that they cared, respected them as individuals, and wanted to support students in achieving academic and personal goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Supports and Definition | Tenets of Academic Coaching
---|---
**SAILS** | In the literature, an early alert system is an academic tool that supports connecting
Coaches used SAILS to obtain timely | students with tutoring and other resources
information regarding students who | links (Laden, 2004), it promotes the coaching
were at risk due to low attendance or | conversation, provides opportunity for
poor grades based on faculty posting a | feedback, and supports the student achieving
flag. Coaches would then link | academic goals (Donner & Wheeler, 2009;
students to tutorial services or other | Gallwey, 2000; IAC, 2010; ICF, 2013;
resources as needed. | NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Bloom, 2009;
| Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Whitmore, 2013).

**Workshops/activities** | Within the literature, coaches provide
Coaches provided workshops/activities | opportunities for group discussion and
which provided the space for students | learning resulting in students garnering
to obtain tools supporting their | strategies to support their success.
academic and personal goals. | (Robinson & Bloom, 2009).
Additionally, coaches enhanced | students’ cultural and social capital.

Below is a table of features that Success Coaches perceived supported student success. Due to the thin amount of academic coaching literature, especially within the
two-year sector, these elements are not mentioned as part of the coaching function, yet are considered best practices to support URP students in the community college sector.

Table 8

Perceived Supports and Best Practice to Assist URP in Two-year Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Supports</th>
<th>Considered a Best Practice to Assist URP in Two-Year Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistance with financial aid</strong></td>
<td>According to the literature, Pell funding is a pivotal lever providing students’ access to community college and is vital to students’ continual enrollment (Eddy, 2012; Goldrick-Rab, 2013; Romano &amp; Millard, 2006). With the research indicating URPs often lack cultural social and capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron &amp; Inkelas, 2006), assisting students with applying for financial aid supports students’ pursuit of academic and personal goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches provided students assistance with completion of the FASFA application, as well as interpretation of forms or letters pertaining to this process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration with faculty</strong></td>
<td>The research indicates programs designed to promote student success cite collaboration with faculty as important (Kezar &amp; Lester, 2009; Kinzie &amp; Kuh, 2004; Kuh, 1996; Martin &amp; Murphy, 2000; Terenzini &amp; Pascarella, 1994). Since the literature states URPs often lack cultural and social capital,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches maintained ongoing communication with faculty regarding the students on their caseload, mainly pertaining to SAILS flags. Additionally, some coaches encouraged connections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with faculty and served as the method of connection. Coaches can serve as a bridge for URPs to connect with faculty, whereby learning to expand their lack of capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

**Collaboration with student services personnel**

The research indicates programs designed to promote student success cite collaboration with student services personnel as important (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh, 1996; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Martin & Murphy, 2000; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). The process of coaches serving as a bridge for URPs to connect with student services personnel supports, can promote student success as well as build student cultural and social capital, which they often lack (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

**Non-academic resource link**

The research indicates URPs experience additional challenges aside from academics which can hamper college attendance (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998; Murray, 2007; VCCS, 2012; Williams et al., 2007). Coaches linking students to non-academic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaches maintained communication with student services personnel.</th>
<th>The majority of coaches indicated utilizing their services to support students on their caseload.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also, some coaches partnered with them for campus activities, while the majority of coaches indicated utilizing their services to support students on their caseload.</td>
<td>Additionally, some coaches served as a source of connectivity to help students establish a connection with the student services personnel staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches provided students with campus or community resources, such as food, clothing, housing, and childcare. Additionally, coaches assisted students with transportation</td>
<td>Coaches linking students to non-academic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the form of bus tokens or gas cards. campus and community resources, supports
the whole students (Gobin, Teeroovengadum, Becceea, & Teeroovengadum, 2012). This
process also supports potential student academic and personal goal achievement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Faculty-student relations</strong></th>
<th>The literature cites URPs lack of cultural and social capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron &amp; Inkelas, 2006). Since the coach acts as a bridge and encourages those conversations, it supports building student cultural and social capital. Also, it supports potential student achievement of academic and personal goals.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some coaches introduced students to faculty members outside of the classroom setting to provide the student with another campus contact.</td>
<td>Also students were encouraged to speak with their instructors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Visiting the high schools</strong></th>
<th>The research indicates URPs lack of cultural and social capital and how unsettling the transition from high school to college can be (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron &amp; Inkelas, 2006). This process of being a bridge and connecting with high school students and matriculating. This provided the Success Coach and potential students an opportunity to connect, dialogue, and reassure the student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some coaches connected with the high school Career Coach and travelled to the high school to meet students on that coach’s caseload who were interested in matriculating. This provided the Success Coach and potential students an opportunity to connect, dialogue, and reassure the student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
they are there to help the student once on campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Coach’s Location</strong></th>
<th>According to the literature, coming onto a college campus can be most unnerving for a student. By intentionally providing a location, mirroring a one-stop shop where all essential campus resources are within proximity can help alleviate stressors associated with the transition (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; Knopp, 2001; Walters, 2003).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A coach indicated having a coach on the main campus and at their satellite campus provided students the on-site support needed and led to student success.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Doing and Believing**

The Success Coaches viewed their role as a source of intervention and supports for students at risk. Even with the revision of the goals in the second cycle, when asked what the goals of the program were, only one coach was able relay the majority of items on the list. On the other hand, three coaches provided a broad stroke description of the goals of the program by indicating its focus is student retention leading to persistence and ultimately graduation with a credential, certificate, or an associate. Four coaches were more general with comments such as “help students succeed,” “provide a successful program,” “be a support for students,” “do whatever we possibly can to make sure the student is successful.” After expressing the program goals, the coaches were quick to provide a listing of the range of tactics they employed in trying to complete their work with students and to meet the outlined program goals as they saw them.
conversation evolved, the findings revealed what the coaches did to meet program goals by implementing their job description closely mirrored what the coaches perceived promoted student success. The findings are presented in the following categories: Academic plan, Resources buttressing students, Building student strategies, Faculty interaction, and On the fringe. Some of the tactics employed aligned with their job description and some did not. The findings that tie to the job functions are denoted, as well as if it was perceived to support student success.

Academic plan. During my conversations with the eight coaches, they all indicated assisting students with the required development of an individualized academic plan was a critical part of the coaches’ job. Moreover, five of the coaches denoted the academic plan supported student success. According to Robinson and Gahagan (2010) an academic plan is a unique written document created for each individual student that includes course mapping, self-assessment results, academic history, student goals (academic and career), identifying successful study strategies as well as potential challenges to goal achievement, and action items. In essence, this tangible document serves as a student’s strategic roadmap to achieve academic success and is continually reviewed until degree completion. Interestingly, the technical document provided to the coaches by the VCCS did not entail a sample of an individualized academic plan (VCCS, 2012) and the language of naming this document varied among the campuses. For instance, Mary referred to it as an “academic and career plan,” whereas Fuzz called it a “degree of progress,” Sugar Mama and Pie used the term “academic progress transcript,” C.T. called it “tracking sheets,” Brian and Selena described it as an “advisory report,” and Sarah identified it as a “curriculum tracking sheet.” Despite the varying names, all
coaches acknowledged self-assessments and goal setting are vital parts of the academic planning process and development, which organized students, helped them to maintain focus, and provided them with a visual model.

**Self-assessments.** Coaches indicated using students’ assessment results to support the goal setting process. The self-assessment results highlighted the range of course options the students had, what career clusters aligned with the student’s interests, and their degree of employability based on current skill level. The types of assessment tools employed, however, varied among the campuses. Brian, C. T., Fuzz, and Sarah shared using the Virginia Placement Test and the Virginia Wizard, whereas Selena only mentioned using the Virginia Wizard. Sugar Mama and Pie, on the other hand, only used the Virginia Placement Test, whereas Mary said she used the Virginia Placement Test, the Virginia Wizard, and the Career and Readiness Certificate. The purpose of the Virginia Placement Test is to determine if a student is in need of developmental English and/or mathematic coursework. The Virginia Wizard is an online tool developed by the VCCS to support students in identifying skills, interests, and potential career pathways. The Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) is an online three-part assessment, which determines an individual’s skill level for employability. If the skill level earned is not sufficient, a tutorial tool is provided to diminish the gap (VCCS, 2015). All of the assessments mentioned by the coaches have been vetted through the VCCS; however, the system office does not dictate which analytic tools must be used for student assessment. Although coaches conveyed utilizing one or more assessments, none of them administered the assessments. As a result, this meant that the coaches had to coordinate efforts with the individuals and offices on campus that administered the assessment tools.
Once assessment results were received, they served dual purposes: first, the assessments provided students feedback of their current skill level and potential career options to explore; and second, the student outcomes offered coaches a baseline for the student and provided information to initiate the conversation of goal setting as part of the academic plan.

**Goal setting.** In assisting students in the goal setting process, which is at the heart of developing the students’ academic plan, Selena captured the weightiness of the goal setting process and its overarching impact, relaying that “if the students don’t have a goal for themselves we’re setting them up for...failure.” Fuzz said that the coach’s role is to “always... start with the student’s goal in mind.” Fuzz recognized the importance of letting each student lead when establishing individualized goals rather than starting with a prescribed or generic goal being sought. C. T. added it is important as a coach that the goal setting comes from the [student] and that you’re extending them, but giving them that measure of comfort zone while still giving them that stretch that’s a little bit out of the comfort zone. You have to sense where a person is. [Overall,] goal setting is very important but it’s all about helping them to learn how they should set their goals rather than coming in [and telling them].”

Once students have established their goals, Sarah felt “it’s really important to our students... [to] keep the end goal in mind.” With the demands of family and work often at the forefront and at times overshadowing student goals, Sarah made it a priority to consistently revisit established goals during student conferences. Furthermore, Mary saw the setting of goals instrumental when broken down to short-term and long-term goals.
This continued reminder of student-created goals allowed students to achieve incremental success for their realistic, attainable goals. Fuzz and Selena noted how they focused students' attention on short-term goals for the current semester so as not to overwhelm them. This action by coaches reflects their ability to understand that progress for URP is gained through short-term wins and that coaches are in tune on how to help students navigate the college years by maintaining focus, minimizing potential stress, and providing students opportunities to meet with academic success.

In discussing the setting of goals, Sugar Mama added, “Students are supposed to establish their own goals. If they don’t know, we say, “Okay…” – well, I say, “Okay, this is what we’re going to do. You’re here. We have some time. So, let’s just go ahead and get some basics done.” Sugar Mama then registers students for the initial courses. In this case, the coach made the decision to set up short-term academic goals of course completion of the “basics” to allow students a chance to explore academic areas and at the same time make forward progress toward degree completion. Sarah noted “It’s totally different if you have a student who knows what they want to do versus a student who really doesn’t know.” In order to address this, Sarah first clarified with students if their intent to transfer (so that a transfer agreement form is completed) or if it to pursue a two-year degree. She then drew from their self-assessment results to move them forward in achieving the goal.

Student Information. In addition to using self-assessments and goal setting to develop the academic plan, Fuzz and Selena’s campuses have additional components denoted on their planning forms. There is a description of the students’ intended program, a complete academic history section, and a transcript summary section. This
information permits the coaches to verify the intended program the student selected, review the academic history to build upon the discussion of future academic goals, and verify if any transferable coursework has been taken. The transcript summary section provides students with a snapshot of courses completed, transferred courses accepted, and their status of program completion. These elements help to expand the student-coach conversation and focus student attention on academic progress.

In conjunction with developing an individualized academic plan, Fuzz indicated using an intake form on her campus. During the initial student meeting, Fuzz related, “We welcome them, then we give them an intake form.” Establishing a good first encounter with a student is important to Fuzz as she wants students to know they are valued and not merely viewed as a number. The intake form she distributed consisted of gathering demographic, educational, employment, and military service information from the students. Additionally, the form targeted questions regarding transportation, financial aid, students’ goals, success strategies used, and areas of struggle. As a result, Fuzz felt this step is vital as “you really have to understand their situation.” It provides her a snapshot of the student and aids in the initial conversation.

Moreover, C. T. indicated that his campus also uses an intake form. Aside from gathering demographic and employment information, the form on C. T.’s campus asked students to denote potential program interest, hobbies, talents, skills, favorite teachers as well as subjects, best as well as hardest experience, what the student considered most fun, and the best decision made. Rather than this information being maintained on a separate form, Mary shared that on her campus the academic plan requests this information. Sharing the form, she explained it elicits educational information, reviews placement test
scores, inquires to determine a student’s goals, identifies potential barriers, and conducts a needs assessment. Mary expounded by sharing, “Helping them to identify the goals without identifying supportive services; I mean that’s defeatist.” The coaches indicated obtaining this additional information provides them a fuller picture of the student, identifies strengths, potential challenges, and possible resources needed.

*Academic advising.* Even though academic advising is not listed on the Success Coaches’ job description, seven of the eight coaches took this additional step by helping students register for classes. Brian expressed how he had received “excessive training” on academic advising. As a result, it provides him with the ability when meeting with students and registering them for classes to locate a course a student can find enjoyment out of and look forward to attending to balance with other required coursework. Brian indicated by conducting this process, it alleviates some academic pressure off of the student and promote their ability to meet with greater success. Selena shared it is pivotal she advises students correctly, otherwise students will not meet with success and “finish in [a] decent time.” Fuzz along with Sarah, and Sugar Mama shared that academic advising was one of their strategies to help support student success. Moreover, C. T. stated when hired “they wanted me to make sure I got my feet on the ground before doing academic advising… and registering students.” In retrospect, C.T. noted, it’s good to be an academic advisor and to know what the limitations are and what the opportunities are so that you can instruct them and help them to get through that and be – at least progress as best they can.
Although seven out of eight coaches identified academic advising as a primary and integral component that they employ as coaches and six of the eight indicated it supported student success, Mary did not. As the outlier, Mary offered

According to the grant – we are required to do general advising...it’s not us putting them in classes. [We verify] the curriculum... the Student Information System...you’re actually enrolled in a program that you want to be... verify who their program advisor is...[and] preparing them for the session with the program advisor. These are the questions you need to write down before you go in this room that you're going to ask because you're going to be an active participant. You're going to get in the driver's seat on this endeavor. And when you go in you're going to communicate to that program advisor: I am invested. I've got questions. Yeah my Success coach helped me but that's okay. The program advisors they like that.

Mary interpreted her role as coach as distinct from academic advising and noted how instead she prepared students to be proactive in the meetings they have with their assigned program advisor. Her interpretation of her role in the program closely mirrors the definition of academic coaching in the literature (Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011).

The development of an individualized academic plan is denoted as a key component of the Success Coach’s job description. As a result, coaches sought to assist students in developing this plan using student self-assessment results and goal setting, yet it was evident that variances existed. The coaches’ academic planning documents did not have a place for indicating student goals, strategies, or an action plan for achievement.
Another variance was that only two planning documents had a description of the students' intended program, a complete academic history section, and a transcript summary section. Furthermore, coaches did not indicate students' goals were maintained on a separate form when discussing the development of the students' academic plan. Only one coach had a more comprehensive academic planning document that encompassed many of the components outlined for this type of planning with students (e.g., goals, strategies, action plan).

In reviewing the Success Coach job description, the language is blurred in outlining the coaches' duties, as it states coaches "must have knowledge and experience in...academic and career and counseling skills" (VCCS, 2012, p.5). Moreover, a baccalaureate degree in "a related field, such as counseling, human resources, social services, or adult education [is] preferred. [Additionally,] work experience in counseling, or academic coaching is preferred" (VCCS, 2012, p. 5). Even though Success Coach is the job title, Sugar Mama indicated "Yeah, it's kind of saying- it's more advising, though...it's not coaching coaching." The title of the job is as a Success Coach, but only one coach indicated following the coaching job functions.

**Resources buttressing students.** Coaches identified some resources that were part of their job responsibilities and instrumental in promoting student success. These included: financial aid and scholarships, SAILS and tutoring, working with student services personnel, non-academic links, and secondary school connections. Additionally, some of these resources were not limited to the campus boundaries.

**Financial aid and scholarships.** Another support for students noted by Success Coaches was assisting them with applying for financial aid. Fuzz expressed how the
AFSA process is "a very big piece because it can be very challenging, very hard to understand, [and] complicated." In fact, Fuzz highlighted "many of our students would not even be in college if they didn’t have that Pell [funding]." Being attuned with the needs of URP they served, Fuzz and Mary acknowledged the aid process is daunting and often derails students. Helping students on their campuses secure needed funding translated to student persistence, which is a critical step for student success.

The vital and central role of funding for students was echoed by Sarah, she added, "But if they’ve lost their financial aid eligibility for some reason, then cost is a huge barrier, so most of them can’t afford to come back." Sarah also recognized the significant role financial aid played in a student’s ability to persist. Sarah continued sharing when one of her students has made poor decisions that placed him on the brink of losing his "I really try to stick it to them, like, “This is very important that you succeed this time,” and they’re usually responsive to that.” During these frank conversations, Sarah noticed students are typically responsive and ultimately successful. The coaches’ willingness to provide feedback including at times judiciously evaluative feedback provided students the opportunity to increase self-awareness (Gallwey, 2000; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Parsloe & Wray, 2000; Whitmore, 2013; Witherspoon & White, 1996).

In an effort to better support students throughout the financial aid process, Sugar Mama felt a more “hands-on approach” was needed. She walked students through the entire process from step one to the completion and submission of the application. Additionally, she ensured students had excess money left over after paying tuition to purchase textbooks and other needed materials. Being aware of her students’ limited financial situation, Sugar Mama recognized how important it is to remove this potential
barrier of a lack of monies to purchase class materials. When they had funds to purchase the required books for class students had a strong start to the semester. Likewise, Fuzz also followed up with her students to ensure they have applied for financial aid and if they had not, she pursued them to get it completed. Realizing the application for financial aid is a time-sensitive process, coaches followed up with students to ensure they submitted their financial aid applications on time so that they received the maximum Pell award.

In regards to assistance with applying for scholarships, Mary and Selena were the only coaches who mentioned assisting students with scholarship information. They took a passive role and only provided assistance to students if there was a scholarship the student was interested in applying for. Although there are scholarship funds available at the institutions, the coaches’ responses indicated they most often provided assistance for applying for financial aid versus scholarships. Because of the critical role that Pell funding held for students and their ultimate potential for success, coaches focused their efforts in this area.

In addition to helping students complete the financial aid application process, coaches also assisted students in understanding academic language, university forms, and management of aid that they received. On their campuses, Fuzz, Sarah, and Sugar Mama indicated their assistance is also needed in the role of translator for the students. Often, they “interpret language,” “jargon,” and “translat[e]” conversations students have with the financial aid office because “people just don’t take the time to explain it in language that they understand or put it in application for them” “you give them a whole soliloquy… [and] you lost them after the first two minutes.” Sarah continued, “we’re
using a process that they are not familiar with.” To lessen student confusion, Fuzz suggests “taking the time to explain it and how it affects them and putting it in the application for them.” As a result, coaches revealed their guidance in the FAFSA process is truly two-fold. First, students use the coaches to act as a translator of formal jargon and forms and second to assist students in filling out the FAFSA application. This form of feedback is interpretive in nature and coincides with the academic coaching process (Kemp, 2014).

In the end, C. T. acknowledged that “financial aid... contribute[s] to a spirit of support for student success,” which aligns with Goldrick-Rab (2013) findings that show that need-base funding promotes student persistence. The opportunity to achieve success therein is tied to the students’ ability to attain and maintain the needed Pell funding. Coaches realized they must remain current regarding FAFSA convoluted processes. But, beyond the filing of forms and receipt of aid, another critical role coach’s play is helping students learn proper funds management. Students often view financial aid as an unlimited supply of funding but by “hop[ping] from major to major” or taking unneeded classes, Sarah and Fuzz expressed students can “burn it.” Thus, helping students learning how to manage their funds, coaches provide another form of support for them.

SAILS and tutoring. Coaches shared how they sought to support students by identifying the academic needs of students through monitoring their attendance and grades. All coaches, except Selena, expressed using the early alert system, SAILS, to monitor students’ grades as well as track their class attendance. Selena instead maintained a traditional approach that she used prior to SAILS implementation a year ago. Specifically, she directly connected with faculty via email to determine if students
were “having problems, [and] then… set them up with tutoring.” Although situated on a medium size campus, Selena’s office location permits easy access to faculty. Additionally, Selena shared setting up appointments with faculty to discuss the students in her caseload. Since the other coach at her college indicated using SAILS, it appeared Selena’s approach in monitoring her students is based merely on personal preference.

Checked daily by coaches, SAILS provided immediate alerts regarding of students needing more personal contact and was perceived instrumental in promoting student success. Brian explained, “The teacher inserts a flag and I automatically receive it and it allows me to reach out to the teacher for clarity and then the student to discuss the matter and look to link them with needed resources.” Those coaches utilizing SAILS maintained constant communication with faculty regarding students in their classes who received a flag. The communication between the coach and the faculty member would either be an email, phone call, or “set[ting] up appointments with them to talk about a student.” For example, in reviewing the SAILS report every morning Fuzz relayed, “[I’ll call the instructor and say “What’s going on? You flagged him. Tell me his situation.” After the initial conversation with the faculty member, Fuzz can have a more informed conversation with the student and then link the student to any needed resources.

Once coaches connected with faculty regarding the posted flag, they indicated reaching out to students via email, phone call, mailing a copy of the email home alert to the student’s, or by catching them on campus after class. The flag would not be lowered in the system until student contact was made, thus SAILS served as a daily reminder to coaches about students in need. In using SAILS, or in the case of Selena’s personal contact, coaches indicated collaborating with the faculty and staff to support students.
While discussing SAILS, another facet of the program’s ability surfaced. The system allows coaches, staff, and faculty members to send students a “kudos” note. Sarah explained “kudos” is a positive note that the instructor can send directly to a student. Mary further conveyed “kudos are very important” to students as the provide encouragement and recognition of what students have done well. An electronic note can be sent by the instructor as well as the coach and any campus member working with the student such as a tutor. Mary indicated when she has sent a “kudos” note, a student replied, “Thank you so much. It’s been a long time since somebody told me I’m doing well.” Mary believed the multiple functional roles of SAILS should be embraced.

Tracking students’ performance as well as communicating with students through a “kudos” note that she is proud of them is equally significant.

In conjunction with SAILS, coaches indicated connecting students with tutorial assistance. Tutoring programs are an additional layer of academic support and C. T. shared how this, “contribute[s] to… support[ing]… student success.” One type of tutoring provided on Brian’s campus is conducted by faculty. According to Brian, the developmental math instructors “are great. [They offer to] work… one-on-one [with tutoring students]... to build up their skills… It’s a huge benefit” and encourages student success. While on Mary’s campus, aside from standard tutorial referrals, she has also used peer to peer tutoring, which she feels is “sometimes… much stronger than what I can have… [it has] been good for academic support.” Tutorial programing addresses the academic challenges facing students and helps them to meet with academic success.

**Student services personnel.** The next area Success Coaches discussed that helped meet their program goals was connecting students with student services personnel. Sarah
mentioned connecting students “looking for internships or job shadowing” with the Job Placement Coordinator. Also she linked students with the tutoring coordinator as well as with the disability coordinator when needed. Whereas Fuzz expressed “I’ll walk them down. We walk them all over campus to make sure—I make that connection. I’ll walk them down to if it’s somebody in student’s services.” Fuzz also shared directing students to the career counselors, as well as keeping students informed when employers visited the campus and job fairs occurred. If students expressed a desire to attend a four-year institution, Selena connected students with the transfer counselor. Often Selena, Brian, and Mary connected students with student services personnel. Mary also linked students with the adult career coaches, and the Career Center. Success Coaches connecting students with student services personnel, was vital. Moreover, three coaches perceived it promoted student success.

**Non-academic link.** Although not denoted as a component of their job description, five coaches recognized the importance non-academic resources and their ability to potentially impact a students’ continuation of their educational pursuits. Mary voiced “it’s very important, in many ways, the non-academic resources for the students because it’s a student-centered coaching model—the resources that the student needs to be successful.” According to the coaches, many students struggle with inadequate transportation, be it money for gas, tokens to ride the bus, or finding a ride as some residential areas do not have access to public transportation. Due to their locale and the broad service areas, students may have a commute up over an hour to attend an 8:00 a.m. class. To assist in this vein, coaches have pursued resources on campus, in the community, or out of their own pocket to provide students with gas cards and bus tokens.
For example, Fuzz shared a situation when a student came to her in tears because she did not have money for gasoline. Fuzz was able to tap into campus resources to obtain gas cards for this emergency. In the end, the student stayed enrolled and “is working ahead in her classes [and is] very successful.” Fuzz attributes this to the student hearing somebody say “You know what? We do care about you” and put actions behind those words. If Fuzz had not done so, she believes the student might not have returned. For this student, a tank of gas and someone validating they care and seeing merit in her pursuing a college education made all the difference between staying in school or dropping out.

Another non-academic need that surfaced was childcare. Some campuses were able to connect students with Working Family Success Network (WFSN), which offer funding to help offset childcare cost. Brian shared when students reveal the need for childcare is a barrier, WFSN can provide help even if “it’s only for a couple weeks... just to take a little bit of a load off of them.” Additionally, Brian indicated funding can be used to assist with transportation.

A third non-academic need indicated was maintaining the basic needs of food, housing, and utilities. As these needs emerged, Selena replied “I have to know where they can go get help, and so I have to put myself out there... That’s good because [if] I know all the resources that we have on campus, ...then the student will know.” Seeing the students struggle in this manner is “heartbreaking” responded Selena. Disheartened as well, Fuzz echoed “How can you be successful in your class if you don’t have any food on your table? You can’t think about your studies and your work if you don’t have a place to sleep at night.” By connecting students to community resources “where they
can leave school that day and go pick up a couple of bags of food from the food bank or whatever else – get help with paying an electric bill – and come back to school the next day” Mary shared, “I’m thinking if we didn’t have that resource they wouldn’t be there the next day or they would drop out.... Linking to resource[s] is very important.” In the end, coaches acknowledged students are human and we cannot disconnect from supporting their human needs while focusing merely on their academic performance. Students are a packaged deal as Brian espoused, coaches must “dig deeper into the resources that we have to find” to help students succeed. Coaches considered the student holistically and not just within the campus walls.

**Secondary school connections.** A practice that was not penned in the Success Coach job description was collaboration with the high school Career Coaches. Although the collaboration between high school Career Coaches and Success Coaches is mentioned to serve as a support to the Success Coaches later in the chapter, two coaches, Fuzz and Sarah, specifically stated how they perceived it supported student persistence when they arrived on the college campus. Meeting the high school seniors “on their turf,” Sarah shared, permitted them to have a dialogue and make a connection with the college. Fuzz indicated it is a logical step which she believes will affect student retention. Coaches view themselves as a bridge so that the student knows someone on the campus who cares, is willing to answer their questions, and will provide support needed. Taking these additional steps helps to capture students and make a time of intimidating transition to one that is smooth.
Building student strategies. As coaches sought to fulfill their duties to support students, this was achieved through developing a rapport, student group and individual contact, and modeling.

Rapport. All coaches acknowledged rapport as a foundational element in promoting student success is the coach-student relationship. Mary related “student persistence... [is influenced by] the coach-student relationship.” According to C. T., “Before you can help as far as academic success you need to build a relationship.” Brian echoed the same sentiment acknowledging “if you can build a relationship with them, you know, they’re going to feel more comfortable when they have the issues that arise.” Mary elaborated that the building of a rapport with students is established through trust. Without trust there is nothing. When Mary and Fuzz engaged students on their campuses in conversation, their goal was to convey “I care.” Likewise, Sarah felt students also needed to know we are here, available, and have a listening ear for them to “share what they’re struggling with, what they’re questioning, what they’re really proud of.”

C. T. framed it by sharing:

The bottom line is this – at this point I’m seeing it as trying to connect is one of the primary goals because there’s no progress in achieving our goals without connections, without building relationships of trust, without face to face contact and learning about these individuals in a personal way that allows them to begin to think, “Hey this guy can help me.” I think that that’s really the bottom line goal is to create those personal relationships of trust.

It was apparent each Success Coach was cognizant of the importance of rapport and trust building. When a coach took the time to first develop a rapport with students, it opened
the door to expanding the conversation and created possibilities to support students’ success.

The establishment of the coach-student relationship appeared particularly stronger for Fuzz, Mary, and Sugar Mama. Fuzz offered “Encouragement, that’s another [student success] key, encouraging them. They need to hear that. Build them up. Be in their corner and cheering for them.” These opportunities only occur when coaches take the time and “just talk to them… that face to face conversation. If you don’t know them you don’t know what’s going on.” Fuzz explained that a “personal touch” should be conveyed out loud to students with the message that “you’re not a number…and somebody really does care about you.” Fuzz posited when this relationship is built, “They’ll stay. They’ll stay because they now somebody’s counting on me to do this. I want to make that person proud. And I think they stick with it because of that sometimes.” A result of Fuzz’s personal touch with her students leads her to assume a maternal role by telling students “I’m their campus mama… and anything you need you just come see me and we’ll try to figure it out together.” In essence, Fuzz relays to her students she is willing to go the extra mile to ensure they have everything that they need to succeed. Nothing is too small or too big for her to roll up her sleeves to support her students.

Likewise, Sugar Mama indicated due to her rapport with the students, they view her as a “mother figure.” As a result, they look to her to for clarity in situations and to provide needed explanations. By focusing on rapport building, Sugar Mama increased her ability to communicate and relate to students. In the end, she “believe[d] that the students who come back,… came back for us. They… came back so as not to disappoint
us.” The role model provided by the coach creates a bond for students that adds to the support structure.

Although Mary echoed the same sentiment that rapport “supports... student persistence,” she achieves it in a different manner. She sought to develop her relationship with students by revealing a piece of her personal side, such as being a first-generation college student and sharing how she can identify with them at this stage in their life. Additionally, she actively pursued students too so that they maintained continual enrollment. Mary believed it is imperative to “continuously remain connected through communication, [by conveying to students] we want you here.” By “pounding the pavement” she enjoys hearing, “I enrolled Ms. Mary [for the] summer session.” Mary summarized, “if that relationship is not trusting and built on trust it’s not going to be a relationship. They’re going to avoid you. They’re going to not come to your office. They’re not going to share what’s going on.” Trust building is central to the coaches’ ability to create rapport with students and is a critical element of the academic coaching function (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; Gallwey, 2000, IAC, 2010; ICF 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen Moran, 2010).

*Student contact.* In response to engaging with students on a regular basis to meet program goals, coaches were to meet with students in a group setting and/or personally. The findings revealed four coaches provide weekly workshops and one other conducted workshops sporadically. Moreover, five coaches indicated the use of workshops/activities provides a space where students can connect outside of the classroom setting and supports student success. Topics in these meetings ranged from providing information on scholarships and financial aid, expanding student knowledge
about college processes, explaining about conduct and the workplace, linking students to community resources, hosting a transfer fair, reviewing components for interviewing, and providing professional development on leadership traits, time management, study skill, stress management, and healthy living. During their weekly meetings, Sugar Mama and Pie sought to provide students with essential support information and to build student-to-student connections so peers could assist one another with transportation. As Sugar Mama and Pie sought to foster an increased sense of community, they also had an underlying motive to provide food at their weekly meetings to address the heightened issue of student hunger. Sugar Mama indicated the monies to purchase the food were provided through a “mini-grant…[and by] restaurateurs [who] present[ed] at the workshops.” These coaches embraced a holistic approach of addressing students’ personal and academic needs to supporting students.

Aside from weekly meetings, Mary highlighted an end of the term activity prior to exams “where everybody comes out, even the president to have a good time and relax.” Both Sugar Mama and Pie echoed how they too host having a closing term activity that it is more reflective in nature, and pointedly is an element within the academic coaching process. The activity consists of “looking back over the semester to see how they have done and discuss areas that could be improved.”

Upon further examination, some coaches interpreted regular basis of connection with students individually beyond efforts associated with the daily SAILS reports. For instance, Fuzz, Mary, Pie, and Sugar Mama noted walking the campus daily and frequenting student meeting areas to connect and engage with students. Sarah indicated she pursued “face-to face” conversations with students who are on campus and who
received a SAILS flag. C. T. echoed, “I don’t want to stay in my office. I want to go out there and see [students] where they are and have them talk to me…” The coaches realized in order to increase connectivity with their students they have to be visible and willing to go to where the students are.

Selena’s interpretation of regular basis was centered on conducting scheduled and walk-in appointments with students, as well as responding to email communications from the professors indicating poor student performance. From her perspective, Selena did not want to “overburden [students].” Although she communicated with her students via email, “[she] leave[s] it up to them to make that contact.” In an effort to be respectful and sensitive to the students, Selena’s position is “Whenever they need me I am available...understand[ing] that [students] have other things that are going on.” Here, Selena sent the message to students that she was an available support, but that it was up to the students to make the first move regarding requests for support.

Feedback. As coaches conducted scheduled and walk-in appointments, they revealed it provided opportunity for pivotal conversations. During their individual conversations with students, some coaches indicated at times providing students with feedback to help increase self-awareness. For example, Sugar Mama provided a student feedback pertaining to grades. She indicated that because the enrollment window for the next semester opens prior to end of the current the semester, meetings with students also allows for advance planning and class selection. However, students may not view their grades to see if they passed, they assume if they did not receive an academic warning letter they have done well. Sugar Mama then asks them, “Did you check your grades?” and the student replies “No.” She then explains the grading process, their responsibility
to monitor their grades, and how they should not be dependent on an academic warning letter to signify they have not done well. The scheduling process turns into a teachable moment and an opportunity to reinforce how to be academically successful by knowing your grade standing in a class.

Mary’s way of garnering feedback to increase student self-awareness is by asking students a series of questions such as

Who’s your program advisor?...What program are you enrolled in?... What barriers or challenges do you see to achieving, whether it be your academic, personal, or your career goals? How can I as your college Success Coach... help you in any way to achieve those goals?

Organizational planning. Fuzz shared how on her campus, students receive a planner. But she added that often students are not using the planners effectively to their benefit. Thus, Fuzz has the student bring the planner and the class syllabi to their meeting. Together, she helps the student plan what is due monthly and color code due dates and assignments for each class. Once this is done for all the classes, Fuzz has them close the planner and then reopen. This process often causes the student to say,

“Oh my gosh. I didn’t realize how much I had to do next week and I’ve got to work. These are the only times the week before that I’m going to be able to do this.” Sometimes when they have that in front of them that helps them be a lot more aware.

Fuzz helps students visually see what academic responsibilities they have for their classes and helps them strategize how to fit in this work with their other obligations. She is using this authentic experience to teach them academic support skills. The use of student
feedback is an element of academic coaching. The coaches used feedback through conversation and organizational planning to increase student-awareness in areas pertaining to academic, cultural, and social capital.

Reflection. In addition to feedback emerging during coaches individual student meetings, the reflection process was used by some coaches. Mary stated, "Reflection is very important to improving one's self, raising one's station in life." Mary would ask the student, "Now that you've kind of crossed that hurdle and looking back what are some things as far as personal responsibility might you do to limit the opportunity let's say for that situation to occur again?" Her goal is for the student to "look back at a critical incident... and look at how [the student] could've done things a little bit differently."

Teaching students to become more reflective allows the students to see how their actions influence outcomes. Selena uses reflection by having students look at their past to help them understand "This is why I'm thinking like that." She encourages students to use the past as a stepping stone to achieve their goal of an education. Overall, Selena summed up, "So sometimes we can allow them to look back in their past to help them to go farther in their future." Understanding how their past influences their current approaches to college helps students create new strategies for success, but to also understand that they are not defined solely by their past.

Sarah also related a story about a student who had "taken a semester off; they've failed out of everything perhaps, or withdrawn from everything, and now they've returned." At this point of reentry to campus, she reflects with the student by asking questions such as
First of all, is this really what you want to do, this particular program, or do you think something else might be a better fit? What happened last time? What are you going to do to change it? How are we going to make sure you succeed this time?

Reflection can be a powerful tool to support students. Yet, three coaches indicated they do not use reflection in their work with students, but they all acknowledged it is needed. Overall, only half of the coaches with a current caseload indicated using the element of reflection with students. Because regular basis of contact with students is not quantified in the Success Coach job description, it was left to the coaches' discretion to determine the frequency of student individual and group contact. As evident, the amount of contact varied by campus and by coach.

**Modeling.** Due to the nature of their job, Success Coaches function in the capacity of a role model. Since URPs often lack the needed cultural and social capital to navigate the postsecondary landscape (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006), by coaches taking students to a faculty member or to a student services personnel staff member when assistance is need or to address a concern not only does this process seek to expand the students' capacity in these areas but it also mirrors the professional protocol and behavior for the exchange. Three coaches functioned in this capacity. Mary indicated one of the purposes of her weekly meetings is to model for students how to interact with faculty members outside of the classroom setting. Additionally, Mary shared when a student reported to her that when he went to an office for assistance, he was “told to come back later.” Her response was to
get up from my chair and walk [him] down there [a]nd also to lead by example. That’s a culture model because they’re watching us. The students are watching what we do, how we’re interacting with other students and other staff and faculty.

Likewise, Sugar Mama expressed a similar experience when she called a student and noted “I see you haven’t registered. What’s going on?” “Oh, well, I didn’t get financial aid.” “Why not?” “Because they told me I couldn’t get it.” She then directed the student to “come in… we can fix that.” By taking the student to the financial aid office and modeling the appropriate conversation with the staff member, asking the essential questions and getting the student processed to receive financial aid to maintain continued enrollment proper increased the students’ capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

Fuzz’s experience on her campus was situated around helping a student. When Fuzz took a student to a student service personnel staff member to get assistance, she spoke first to the staff member, explained why she and the student were there, and asked if the staff member could provide assistance or would an appointment need to be made. In this instance, Fuzz modeled how to properly seek assistance and ask for help. When coaches lead by example as a role model for students during their times of collaboration with faculty and student services personnel, it is a powerful tool to provide students with to add to their toolbox, which supports their success.

**Faculty interaction.** The coaches indicated faculty play a vital role in supporting the success of the CCSCI program. Although coaches were required to communicate
with faculty, coaches acknowledged the faculty-coach collaborative partnership and faculty-student relations were components they perceived to promote student success.

**Faculty-coach.** Success Coaches indicated that communication with college faculty about students helped them meet their program goals and promoted student success. Aside from collaborating with faculty regarding SAILS, coaches mentioned additional interactions. Fuzz noted at the inception of the CCSCI on her campus, she began to foster relationships with faculty members. She met with every department head to understand the coursework and programming in the various academic majors to ensure accurate program information was shared with students during the meetings she had with them. Moreover, Fuzz indicated,

> Anytime we have like a program change at the college we will go around to the appropriate department, sit down with their person who kind of takes care of that and get up to speed on what’s new, what’s changed, so that we’re aware.

Intimate knowledge of program requirements allowed Fuzz the ability to better help students as she had precise understanding of what the students needed to do to complete their programs. Likewise, C. T. has reached out to faculty asking them to “explain… what their programs are like and how they’re teaching classes and the kind of challenges they face” so he can better serve students. Additionally, Brian shared how the developmental math instructors “come by our offices to see if we have any questions about any of the students that are in their classes.” The coaches’ interaction with faculty was pivotal.

Aside from these conversations with faculty, Sarah noted how “at the beginning of every semester [I send] out an email… to all the faculty, just reminding them what the
grant is and what I’m there to do.” C. T. stated “Success Coaches need to build all kinds of collaborative relationships on the campus.” All of the coaches agreed collaboration with faculty is important, however, as with the job requirement of regular contact with students, the coaches’ job description did not quantify the minimum degree of communication required with faculty members.

**Faculty-student.** A practice coaches acknowledged to support student success, but was not noted in their job description was faculty-student interaction. As coaches mentioned earlier in the chapter the importance of developing a rapport with students to support student success, C. T., Brian, and Mary indicated faculty-student interactions are also essential to supporting student success. Mary went on to share, that those campus conversations “make a difference.” Brian echoed the same sentiment and recounted how he encourages students to reach out to faculty in the field they are pursuing and see them as a valuable resource as well as someone who is interested in their success. Additionally, Brian reported introducing students to faculty to help them make a connection with another person on campus who could even be a “mentor.” C. T. indicated in the classroom, “faculty... take additional time to address specific student needs... They really get behind the students... to get the best from them [by]... creating an environment in which all students... feel comfortable... and [can] work on progression.” Providing this environment for students, created a space where students felt they had the ability to ask questions and seek help from faculty. Coaches acknowledged the value of the faculty-student relationship supporting student success and sought to encourage those campus conversations inside and outside of the classroom.
On the Fringe. As coaches expressed elements of their job description conducted, visiting SDV classes was misunderstood and most coaches indicated using technology in various ways, yet, both were not perceived to support student success. Also student enrollment in developmental educational coursework and the coach’s location on campus were not part of the job description but were identified by one coach as supporting student success. Of note, these items were not at the core of the coaches’ conversations.

Visiting SDV. Another area Success Coaches sought to meet the Initiative’s goals, and was part of their job description requirement, was to visit student development course (SDV) classes, which is a six-week college orientation course. Students participating in the CCSCI are required to take the class during their first semester. According to the job description, coaches were to “visit student development course[s]” (VCCS, 2012, p. 5). Beyond the stated requirement, no further details regarding the coaches’ role in the SDV process was provided. The findings uncovered only two coaches, Sarah and Fuzz, indicated visiting the SDV classes. Since the VCCS did not provide direction regarding what coaches should do when visiting SDV classes, coaches developed their own curriculum of lessons based on what they inferred students need to be successful. Sarah’s lessons focused on “time management...money management, [and] stress management” and Fuzz’s lessons addressed financial aid and how to properly manage those monies. This visiting requirement is still active, however, Fuzz is the only coach participating in this study who indicated currently visiting SDV classes.

In addition to the intentionality of this component, what was lacking was how it is to function, and its connection to supporting student success. Four coaches indicated
they had been assigned as SDV instructors, which included providing the curriculum designated for this student college orientation course. Depending on the institution, this extra duty was assigned from different leadership levels, such as program supervisor, area supervisors, or the college president. Despite this assigned duty of teaching in SDV, no concern regarding this requirement was expressed by Fuzz, Sarah, or Sugar Mama. In fact, Sarah felt this was “great,” even though it hinders her from now visiting other SDV classes. On the other hand, Mary did not share the same degree of enthusiasm. Mary asserted teaching SDV impacted her availability to students in her caseload. Mary continued to express concern that this additional teaching requirement entailed maintaining “office hours for the students that [she] teach[es]… [and] juggling the grading of… papers.” This additional role expands the coaches caseload of students beyond grant requirements and makes it so they are no longer full-time restricted to the CCSCI grant. Even though the SDV courses are structured to provide students with additional forms of support, the additional oversight duties for the Success Coaches to also staff the courses versus merely visiting the classes extends the scope of their work. Moreover, visiting SDV was the only element of the Success Coaches’ job description that the coaches did not perceive supported student success. This may be due to the nebulous manner it is presented on the job description.

**Technology Use.** Aside from using SAILS and student self-assessment results, coaches indicated other technology components to support students. All Success Coaches were provided a laptop through grant funding, with the intention that this would assist them in maintaining communication with students via email. Mary intentionally brought her laptop to the Workforce Academy, and indicated she had “been
communicating with students [all the while]... I haven't disconnected which is helpful. I think it was a wise decision.” Aside from communicating with her students via email, Mary produced a weekly electronic newsletter. The newsletter provided students answers to FAQs, upcoming events and important dates, links to the weekly community non-academic resources, and her contact information. Additionally, Mary and her colleague coach have a Success Coach Webpage that links to the main campus website. The webpage provides an overview of the program, weekly student meeting topics, FAQs, resources available, a listing of available resources that includes a comprehensive 200 plus community resource listing, educational links, and the contact information for the coaches. This display of information and contact information to the coaches provided students with symbolic support in addition to the tangible resources because the coaches’ contact information was located in multiple spots and the website included an array of resources at the students’ fingertips.

In viewing the other Success Coaches college websites for the participating sites, one campus noted both coaches with their name, picture, and contact information, another campus only noted one of the two coaches with name, picture, and contact information, and one other campus noted both coaches in a directory listing with contact information only. Two campuses did not provide any online links for information regarding the coaches or the CCSCI program. Thus, most but not all of the campuses provided students with a means to locate contact information for the Success Coaches with whom they are working.

Brian shared technology support for students on his campus included providing, a space in the Success Coach office area for a student computer. The availability of a
student computer provided students with a location where they can come and work on
“financial appeals… resumes and things like that.” Many students from URP do not have
access to computers in their homes to help with their school work or to support their job
search. The availability of a dedicated computer for students in the program removed a
barrier for success for the students working with Brian.

Brian, Mary, Selena, Sugar Mama, Pie, Sarah, and Fuzz indicated using
technology for emailing students and faculty. Additionally Sugar Mama took advantage
of texting with her students as this communication provided a quick and often student
preferred method for connecting. Sarah shared that she tried to use Blackboard to
connect with students, but since it “didn’t have a huge impact” she did not keep it. She
also “tried a Facebook group, [but it] didn’t work that well, didn’t have a lot of success
with that.” In the end, Sarah found that her weekly email to all students regarding
relevant information proved most effective. Fuzz and her colleague coach created a
Facebook page where they “share with [students] activities that are going on campus,
what trips are going on, [and] that kind of thing.” For Fuzz’s students, the Facebook
connections worked well.

Aside from the computerized reports from SAILS and student self-assessments,
the use of technology was limited and was not perceived to support student success. The
majority of coaches use simple emails to stay connected to students, with some coaches
using various types of social media or creating websites with information. Pushing
information out to students worked better than passive forms of merely posting
information that the students had to access. Yet, the existence of websites, Blackboard
sites, and Facebook pages did serve to provide symbolic support for the students and usable information regarding additional resources.

**Developmental education enrollment.** Due to poor academic high school transcripts, many students entering community college must enroll in one if not more developmental courses (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Green, 2006). As a result, one item that is not on the coaches’ job description, but one coach felt strongly about was that student enrollment in developmental courses supports student success. Student enrollment in development courses is determined by a self-assessment taken at the time of admission. C. T. indicated a students’ enrollment in these courses supports student success since it addresses educational deficiencies. C. T. continued sharing developmental classes afford instructors in “breaking it down into smaller components and having the flexibility that they do” to augment the course to meet the needs of the student enrolled. C. T. feels it makes a difference in supporting student success.

**Coach location.** Another item indicated to support student success that was not listed in the job description was the coach’s location. Sarah acknowledged the coach’s assigned location is an administrative duty, however, she felt it was important to note. When an institution has two campus locations and assigns a coach to each campus, Sarah perceived it promoted student persistence. Sarah continued by sharing having a coach on-site to provide students with assistance was instrumental and was a factor for her institution’s increased satellite graduation rate. Although the coach’s location is also identified later in the chapter to support the Success Coach achieving program goals, only Sarah specifically noted the coach location promotes student success.
Summary. This study found Success Coaches are employing their job description and best practices as they seek to bolster student success. As coaches reflected on what they do, they indicated all components on their job description, except for visiting SDV as well as areas that are not specified, contributed to the success of students. The most frequent supports for student success were the academic plan, assistance with financial aid, tutoring that aids in strengthening students’ academic performance, and the SAILS early alert system, which not only allows coaches to monitor students, but also see who on the campus is linked to them that can lead to further conversation on supporting the student. Collaboration with faculty and student services personnel provides the connections needed that allow coaches to serve as a role model for students regarding professional communication and behavior. Student activities/workshops conducted by the coaches sought to build comradery as well as life tools for students. Rapport which is at the heart of coaching, allowed coaches a means to connect students with academic and non-academic resource links to support the whole student. Faculty-student relations helped expand the students; campus network, visiting high schools helped build bridges for student transition, coach’s assigned to satellite campuses provided on-site student support, and the academic advising done by the coaches, while not a part of the job description, all was perceived to ultimately support students. In the end, the coaches employed a range of practices to support student success. Of note the practice of academic advising that coaches mentioned they employed, runs counter to the description of academic coaching and may ultimately serve to undercut the coaching function of the position.
Scaffolding Success

The Success Coaches identified several forms of support that aided them in helping students. The supports that emerged are presented in five categories, they are: collaborative supports, location, campus culture, enhanced communication, and program highlights.

Collaborative supports. As discussed in the previous section, all eight coaches noted collaborative support with faculty members was vital to help meet program goals. Other areas of collaborative supports, for seven of the coaches included working with student service personnel staff. Also, seven coaches identified their peer Success Coaches as providing support, and five of the coaches identified the high school Career Coaches in their areas as also helping them in supporting student success. As noted above, the most common form of connection with faculty members occurred as a result of monitoring student grades and attendance through the SAILS early alert system which created a trigger for the coaches to seek input or clarity regarding a flag raised for a student. Additionally, Mary shared “I routine[ly] visit the faculty offices and ask for feedback and communicate any new happenings with our program.” Moreover, Mary relayed how the faculty and staff were instrumental in working with students to developing two videos highlighting the Success Coach program and a faculty member edited the videos so that they could be uploaded to their institutions website “to enhance the marketing of the [CCSCI] program and to educated folks on what we do.” Faculty support was not limited to the walls of their classroom, but extended outside as well.

Another source of collaborative supports was student services personnel. Pie expressed other coaches, such as Adult Career Coaches had been supportive in helping
students. Mary relied on the job placement coordinator in the Career Center to help students when they have expressed an interest in completing an internship, or to provide help in securing a part-time job. Also, Mary elaborated on how she counted on an Adult Career Coach to provide a “little segment on the Career Readiness Certificate” during specific weekly workshops to “take the nervousness away” from the students prior to taking the assessment. Likewise, Fuzz would explain to students,

This is what [the staff member is] probably going to talk [to you] about. [Then Fuzz will walk them to that location and ask the staff member,] “Such and such do you have time to speak with this student or can I make an appointment?”

Mary, Selena, and Brian all indicated having a Student Support Services (SSS) department, which is part of the TRIO program on their campus. Since CCSCI and SSS programs have the same target population characteristics and a key component embedded in an SSS program are tutorial and academic services, these Success Coaches are able to refer students from their caseload for “tutorial or anything...students need on an academic level.” Sarah commented that she uses time during the summer months with fewer students on campus to connect with support service staff for “brainstorming...[and] bouncing ideas off of [each other]” on ways to support students. The support student services personnel provided the Success Coaches occurred year-round.

The third area of support was the coaches’ connections with the other Success Coach(es). Coaches shared how they worked with their counterpart on their campus to discuss their separate student caseload, plan activities, communicate with the campus, discuss program development, and discuss programming concerns. C. T. elaborated how
he and his counterpart who is on a satellite campus “communicate[d] quite a lot” which helped him to understand what has been done as well as challenges met.

Collaboration with Success Coaches was not limited to the colleagues located on the same campus or on a satellite campus. Mary shared she often reaches out to coaches on different campuses and calls and checks-in with them, asking “How’s everything going? What can I do? Because it helps them and it helps me because I learn something from them.” Likewise, Sugar Mama strongly expressed the value of being able to connect with another Success Coach on a different campus. Piggybacking on Sugar Mama’s comments, Sarah mentioned

Success Coaches at the other schools, when we get together and we talk about what other people are doing, what works best at their schools, usually I can incorporate at least a piece of that into what I’m doing [on my campus.]

In particular, during the reporting process after the first cycle, coaches reached out to one another to help figure out the requirements. Sarah referred to this process as a “hairy mess” and reached out to the other coaches for support.

The last area of collaboration occurred with the high school Career Coaches in the region. Sarah recognizes the value of connecting with high school Career Coaches and hoped to expand the collaboration even further. Sarah recounted that through receiving a referral from the high school that she was able to go make a connection with a particular student. Sarah said she found this type of collaboration one of the best ways to get a student to persist a little bit better.” A more formal collaboration occurred on Fuzz’s campus as a result of the realignment and merger of the high school coaches into their college department. As a result, the “high school coaches may identify students who they

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feel could use our services [and will] refer them to us.” Fuzz and her colleague would then go to the high schools to meet and connect with the students. Fuzz’s viewed this as an essential element as her role as a Success Coach and expressed

I’m excited about it. I think [the CCSCI is] a great initiative and I think it’s definitely a hole that needed to be plugged in the high school coach program.

This only made sense to have somebody to go streamline and pass them off to and I’m excited about how, in the long run how this will affect our students and their retention on campus.

Moreover, Brian and C. T. too acknowledged the importance of these collaborative connections and are extending themselves in conversation to further build these campus contacts. The multiple areas of collaboration supports the notion and the value of an all hands on deck approach. The collaborations created a stronger safety net for students and added support for the Success Coaches’ work.

Location. When Success Coaches discussed their work setting, seven mentioned the benefit of where they were situated on campus. They were either housed in the same area with other campus support services or within close proximity. Sarah shared being in the hub of everything, provides the ease of connecting students with support staff members. She merely picks up the phone, checks their availability to meet with a student, and then walks the student over for the appointment. Additionally, their location also permitted them quick access to students. Likewise, Sugar Mama, Pie, and Fuzz mentioned that on their campuses they could come out of their office area and easily catch students in the hall or connect with them informally and request to have them come talk in their offices. Mary was an outlier in that her office location was with the faculty
versus student services personnel. She viewed her location as optimal, however, since it placed her on equal footing with them and it’s very important because the faculty engagement in this process with the coaching is important for their buy in. So positioning me in that location really serves me well and serves the faculty well. That’s been essential to the success of the [CCSCI] program.

Moreover, Mary mentioned “being located in an area where there are other things going on and services being provided… could be a distractor and … a barrier to students coming to see me.” In the end, the coaches viewed their designated location as a benefit to the students and which resulted in supporting the work of the Initiative.

**Campus culture.** As coaches continued sharing elements that best supported their role as a Success Coach, institutional culture and their supervisor were identified as key supports. Three coaches indicated their campuses institutional culture regarding student success was evident from the college President down. Mary shared when their campus received notification of our selection to participate [in the CCSCI] our president was enthusiastic. He’s totally bought into this coaching model… Every time he gives a speech of some kind to the college he mentions the Success Coaches by name. He says our names. That’s how much he supports it.

She went on to share how the campus culture is “welcoming.” She interpreted this "in terms of the buy in, gain[ned] from the faculty and staff and the leadership." Like Mary, Fuzz’s President was supportive and “identified” them publicly at campus meetings. She went on to share they were fully integrated into the campus. Selena expressed, “at our
institution, we work together” as the Initiative was “shared in our annual meeting as a whole, as campus whole.” When it comes to the program Selena continued, “our President, she supports it and the Vice-President also.” Selena often referred to her campus operating with a spirit of teamwork.

C. T. indicated on his campus the faculty and staff promote an institutional climate where he feels a “sense of unity.” He shared this “resonance” supports his role as a coach. He views them as “awesome people…helpful” to him and to the students.

Supervisors were identified by four coaches as providing support. When trying to gain direction and enhanced communication regarding the implementation of the program, Fuzz recognized and appreciated the many times her supervisor took the coaches’ concerns and elevated them to the central office. On Sugar Mama and Pie’s campus, they indicated “our supervisor is on top.” They went on to clarify this statement infers the supervisor provides a great deal of support. As many coaches have been tapped to perform a number of “other duties,” Mary credits her supervisor in minimizing the amount of work beyond her job description that she has received. Mary indicated that her supervisor recognized that the central office “[does not] want an excuse report. They want an impact report and that’s the bottom line.” Although the type of supervisory support varied, the Success Coaches valued what their supervisors provided and noted how this aided the work they performed with students.

**Enhanced communication.** Four coaches made mention of burgeoning and more frequent communication occurring with the central office in the second cycle of the initiative. Sarah expressed an increase in “conference calls” being made than in the past. C. T. echoed Sarah’s point noting, “We’ve had some conference calls… which have been
helpful." Likewise, Fuzz shared "that open communication has been much more consistent." Mary concurred by making note of the current leadership being "responsive" to emails being sent. Even though coaches cannot turn back the hands of time to restart the inception of this Initiative and fill the void of the lack of communication and direction at the onset of the program, it appears they are hopeful with the growing levels of communication coming from the central office.

Communication on campus also provided a needed support. When the CCSCI program began at Fuzz's campus, she indicated "we had a great support person here who took us under her wing, showed us how to write queries to pull the data that we were looking for." As a result, Fuzz is able to know how to quickly access data needed and "get results fast." She recognizes the strength of this skill learned as other coaches "had to request data from their query person and wait days or weeks before they got that back in hand." Timeliness in having access to data and knowing how to interpret data has helped Fuzz in serving students. Because of the on campus communication with the support person, Fuzz was able to better support the students in her caseload.

**Program Highlights.** Since the program was implemented, changes in program goals emerged. Sites obtaining more success for these goals indicated a higher degree of student contact (on both an individual level and through group workshops/activities). Additionally, those coaches with higher frequency of faculty collaboration had greater success on the outcome measures. These findings also align with an earlier Success Coach survey (VCCS, 2013) which cited "colleges which appeared to have the most success in filling their rosters and increasing student engagement used multiple means of reaching out to students."
Another program highlight that emerged focused on the Success Coaches' functionality. Mary expressed finding security by established coaching parameters. On her campus, roles are clearly defined which she feels is a “safeguard” from her “becom[ing an] advisor.” To further preserve her role as a coach versus advisor, she does not “have access to ... enroll students in courses.” The intentionality of her campus leadership distinguishing between the roles permits the coach and the advisor to provide complimentary services supporting students rather than duplicated services.

**Summary.** As Success Coaches sought to scaffold students for success, they too acknowledged that in order to achieve the goals of the program, it would only be achieved through collaborative partnerships with faculty, student service personnel, and the high school Career Coaches. Moreover they noted the CCSCI cannot be a program that only they promote, but it must be embraced and infused within the campus culture. Coaches noted the intentionality of their location on campus supported their efforts. With their burgeoning role on campus, some coaches indicated the area of communication with the VCCS central office is increasing. As coaches continue to build upon their campus culture their campus climate should increase as well. With one coach experiencing the benefits of being able to navigate and have quicker access to campus data needed to accomplish her job, what benefits one could benefit all. It is evident that the coaches are feeling supported on a number of fronts, especially by those who are in the trenches with them seeking to bolster student success.

**Hampering Hardships**

The Success Coaches offered several challenges they faced that hindered their success and that of their students. The most frequent challenges that emerged are in the
categories of: adrift, role confusion, meeting of standards, budget, caseloads, and campus climate. The less frequent challenge that emerged is presented in one category: constraints.

Adrift. During the implementation of the CCSCI, two factors made the coaches feel adrift. These factors included: lack of direction and lack of communication. Since the inception of the CCSCI to the present, seven of the eight coaches expressed frustration with the lack of direction and a lack of communication from the central office. At the onset of the program, institutions interested in participating in the CCSCI had to "convey their intent... by August... 2012" (VCCS, 2012, p.3). Mary shared that due to the time institutions were notified and the late notification of their selection that program implementation had to occur "very fast [and] very quickly." The urgency to move swiftly was hinged on the fact that the fall semester had already begun and institutions were required to hire the coaches and submit their identified target 200 students by September 2012 (VCCS, 2012). Mary continued, that this short turnaround between selection as a CCSCI site and the implementation of the program “wasn’t ideal.”

As the CCSCI was set into motion, a few conference calls and a face-to-face with the Chancellor occurred in the fall of 2012. Despite these occurrences, coaches still indicated they “didn’t really have clear direction.” As result, coaches felt adrift and began to ask questions and express concerns. When concerns were sent to the central office seeking direction and clarity, Mary relayed that the “feedback was slow.” Coaches became discouraged. This sense of Success Coaches being unclear pertaining to their role in the CCSCI program was not unknown to the VCCS. In fact, a theme that emerged from the Success Coach survey conducted by the central office stated “because the
program is new, many success coaches are still figuring out their role in assisting students within all of the other student support structures” (VCCS, 2013, p. 1). Yet despite this knowledge, the VCCS has not to date provided the needed clarity. Fuzz shared how “months would go by and we got no clear response, no clear direction and so I think that’s why right now there’s so much disconnect.” Sugar Mama asserted, 

When this program was created there was no outline on what you’re supposed to do… so we created our program for ourselves. [When looking across the participating colleges] some of the things are similar but some of the things are very, very different, because everybody did what they thought was best for the students at their particular school.

The void of direction was filled by the coaches taking the initiative to put into place programming elements they felt would best support student success and were in the outline of the job description.

Although coaches were provided the outcome program measures, Mary indicated, “the data collection tool[s] and things were not [present]” so her institution developed their own. Sarah asserted “we [did] not have a cohesive agreement on how to report… we [didn’t] have a common language.” Sarah shared that the lack of shared structures “reflects when we go to do reporting, because we’re all reporting differently because we’re all doing different things.” In the end, when data for the first round were submitted, Mary commented, we were comparing “apples and oranges.”

As of fall 2014, the central office has assumed the reporting of program data. Although the data management has shifted, Sarah strongly emphasized “the underlying issue of lack of direction and communication… that’s still there.” These issues remain as
the campuses must still supply the data to the central office for the final reporting, so
differences in definition or sources of data collected are still reflected in the final
reporting. Likewise, C. T.’s expressed

I do feel it is a little bit ambiguous... my impression is just they rolled it out and
there was a little too much individual adaptation. So I think from a management
standpoint it’s going to be difficult to assess what they’ve done.

Succinctly put, Pie asserted “It’s [still] a work in progress.” In the end, Selena simply
summarized that

Each college birth[ed the program] on their own, so of course, we all have
different components to make it work for us. I think it would be nice to actually
know exactly what the Chancellor really wants, what he really is looking for.

The lack of direction and the lack of communication coaches have experienced from the
inception of the CCSCI to the present have left them feeling adrift. Rather than
functioning as a cohesive unit, the felt they were functioning in isolation.

Role confusion. The challenge of role confusion emerged as well. As a
relatively new initiative and with the growing movement of coaching in general, one
coach felt their role is often misunderstood. This misunderstanding is linked to people
being “unfamiliar with [what] coaching” entails. As a result, assigning “other duties and
responsibilities” has occurred, with added job functions be required of the coaches
beyond the purview of the job description. One of these functions includes academic
advising, which should not be a part of academic coaching. To this end, role confusion is
evident across every participating campus except one.
All of the coaches are functioning in capacities outside of their job description, yet only once coach has identified the additional duties and assignments and conducting academic advising as problematic. The lack of complaint regarding the expansion of job functions may be that on rural campuses all employees wear multiple hats. The expansion of job duties was attributed to the lack of direction and the lack of communication previously discussed. In an effort of trying to lead upward, one coach expressed frustration in attempting "to convince the college leadership that it is important to stay within the framework of the grant," but to date Success Coaches are not "restricted" to function in the capacity and role of coach. Thus, all the coaches are operating outside of the role defined for them in the CCSCI grant.

Meeting of standards. The third challenge of meeting of standards surfaced during the VCCS annual Workforce Academy meeting in October, 2014. Based on how the Success Coaches interpreted their roles and how the programs were implemented on the various campuses, a range of program outcomes resulted. At the Workforce Academy meeting, CCSCI program outcomes were reported. It was in this public context that coaches first learned how the program was progressing as a whole. Specifically, the data shared included summative outcomes for the first three updated goals (Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 2014). At the time of the interviews, one of the original coaches communicated,

Many times we provided documentation, we provided the data but there was no feedback of – well honestly the first that we had heard on any kind of feedback was at the conference in Hampton in that session with James Andre. That is the
first time that they had actually publicly said “Here are the number of colleges
who met this goal.” We had never seen anything from that.

As of spring 2015, coaches have not received more formal reports on their
outcomes to help inform how they could be making improvements on campus. As a
result, coaches are operating off of their own institutional data in the hope of retooling to
improve student outcomes. One coach indicated being “disheartened” due to this lack of
communication and feedback.

Ultimately, I obtained outcome data from the VCCS central office (Office of
Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 2014) for each institution participating in the
CCSCI. The disaggregated data showed which institutions met each of the three program
goals and which partially met the goals. The three updated goals and outcomes follow:

Goal #1: SDV completion within the first semester (six of the nine colleges
exceeded their target goal);

Goal #2: completion of developmental English course within one year (three of
the nine colleges exceeded their target goal);

Goal #3: completion of developmental math course within one year (four of the
nine colleges exceeded their target goal) (Office of Institutional Research and
Effectiveness, 2014, p. 2). Table 9 below illustrates the institutional outcomes for
participating CCSCI institutions on the three updated goals.
Table 9

**CCSCI Participating Institutions Program Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Baseline 2010</th>
<th>Target 2013</th>
<th>Target 2014</th>
<th>Actual 2013</th>
<th>Actual Vs. 2014 Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>% of 200 students enrolling in developmental courses</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>% of students completing SDV in first semester</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>English who completed developmental English</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>-11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>% of 200 students enrolling in developmental courses</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>English courses within one year</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Developmental courses within one year</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>% of 200 students enrolling in developmental courses</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<td>English who completed developmental English</td>
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Note. NL = Not Listed

Because the report provided is not public and the fact that the information was not disseminated to the participating institutions, only summary data can be shared in order to protect the confidentiality of the individual institutional outcomes.
By referring to the information the coaches revealed during their interviews, it is possible to shed light regarding potential factors of impact of actions on outcomes. These potential factors are in the area of staffing, structural realignment, and lack of training.

**Staffing.** Although coaches did not identify staffing as a challenge, executing the initiative at the campus level without the required staff members may have impacted program outcomes. Since 2013, two campuses were understaffed and did not have two full-time coaches. On one campus, the second coach was part-time while on the other campus not only was there only one coach, this coach was split with another position. Because of added responsibilities, all of the coaches assumed additional duties and responsibilities outside of their job description and are not operating as full-time restricted staff for the CCSCI. And, some coaches have more additional responsibilities than others.

**Structural realignment.** Additionally during the Workforce Academy meeting, Success Coaches had a session where they were informed at the end of summer 2014, the Chancellor realigned all VCCS coaching programs and placed them under Workforce Development. Scott Kemp, Director of College Access for the VCCS, (personal communication, October 1, 2014) indicated the intent of this consolidation was to minimize overlap, align training, create collegiality, foster better “wraparound services” and “soft handoffs” of students, increase cooperation, and to leverage resources.

**Lack of training.** Since the program’s inception, Fuzz, Mary, Pie, and Sugar Mama indicated participating in a number of professional development activities, such as: Workforce Academy’s, a few regional meetings with the prior program director, a face-to-face meeting with the Chancellor, and on-campus training opportunities. Although
they shared having “quite a variety” of training to increase their effectiveness as a Success Coach, three of the four regularly conduct academic advising. Furthermore, no coaches interviewed indicated having any coaching certification. Based on what the coaches identified as training opportunities which have occurred, targeted academic coaching training to function in the capacity of a Success Coach has not transpired.

During the fall 2014 Workforce Academy as a result of the VCCSs structural realignment, Success Coaches were provided exposure to a coaching conversation map (see Appendix R) for the first time. Moreover this professional development session provided Success Coaches a first time meeting with the VCCS Career Coach Specialist, who now oversees professional development services for all coaches. During a 45 minute PowerPoint workshop at this fall meeting, coaches were provided with an overview of the Career Coaching fundamentals and a coaching conversation map to employ.

Despite revealing this coaching conversation map to attendees, a detailed template or manual for training them on how to navigate through each phase of the coaching conversation has not occurred. In fall 2014, the process to obtain funding was being sought so that training for a Virginia Adult Career Coaching Certification can be offered to all Success Coaches. After reviewing the coaching conversation map provided in the meeting, one can see the alignment of the VCCS coaching conversation map with the emerging academic coaching literature, both of which do not include the role of academic advising (Robinson & Galhagan, 2010). The VCCS coaching conversation map is student-centered wherein coaches are to remain in the “passenger seat” rather than the “driver” (Kemp, 2014, p. 4).
Budget. Within the CCSCI grant, budgetary restrictions surfaced as a challenge for three coaches as they sought to conduct student group activities. Although "we can offer a workshop," Sarah stated "the best way to get [students] to come to that workshop is if we offer them food." According to the CCSCI's program director,

Program funding cannot be used to purchase food for student activities or workshops unless they last for 4 hours or more, are designed for the purpose of providing technical information, occur during meal time, and do not allow a sufficient break to get a meal ("working session") (J. Andre, personal communication, March 11, 2015).

The coaches are unclear why other campus departments and VCCS grants have this flexibility and they do not. Because of poverty levels in rural communities, having food at events often means that the students will at least get a meal that day. As well due to students commuting distance their time on campus is limited as they are often busy trying to fit in meetings between classes and other obligations, which may mean that they will miss a meal if they attend. Fuzz expressed her frustrations as this barrier also limited off-site activities by stating "we're not able to provide food, I mean we can't [really] we're rural. It's very hard for us to take [students] anywhere in a day and not provide a meal somewhere." In order to circumvent this barrier for on-campus activities, Fuzz relayed how she "piggyback[s] on campus seminars" where food is provided by other departments in Student Services who are hosting the seminars and have the budgetary line item to support it. Selena's approach to addressing this barrier is to conduct fundraisers to support conducting workshops and providing food. While some coaches indicated using grant funds to provide food at their workshops/activities. As coaches are
now in the second funding cycle, Fuzz went on to share the direction regarding the budgetary element is “still kind of muddy,” which was evident given how the variance in how coaches utilized grant funding.

**Caseloads.** Another challenge regarding the grant is establishing student caseload. This challenged surfaced for five coaches. One coach stated, “The biggest challenge is actually making contact with the students. It’s hard to get them in my office.” Another coach elaborated that establishing caseload “it’s not just a simple selection process but you have to go through the contacting processes and figure out who wants to work with you and who doesn’t.” Recall that the caseload expected is 200 and the coaches indicated they split the student caseload in half or by alphabet for the two coaches on campus. After the time-consuming process to establish their caseload for the semester, coaches may face the same difficulty the following semester to re-establish their caseload due to student attrition, graduation, and new students just enrolling. Selena indicated how difficult it was to connect with students as often she finds the student’s telephone has been disconnect, that student email accounts are purged if the student does not enroll the following semester or that mail it is returned because the students have moved without supplying a new address. These challenges are not new to coaches as it was a theme that surface in a 2013 Success Coach survey (VCCS, 2013). To counter these difficulties, some coaches indicated accepting more than a 100 students per coach to ensure maintaining the required caseload if some students dropped. The target student population for the CCSCI often is transient, which makes it difficult for the coaches to maintain student contact.
The general enrollment patterns of the community college naturally create barriers to tracking students. First, rural populations are declining and as a result, the number attending the local community college is decreasing. Second, the open enrollment feature of community colleges permits for the ebb and flow of student attendance, which makes, attempts to maintain a consistent student caseload of 100 per coach at times a challenge.

Campus climate. Even though some coaches noted how their campus culture created supports for the program and for their work with students, which fostered a climate where coaches felt everyone functioned as a “team.” This feeling of connectivity and support was not the case at all campuses. On one particular campus, the two coaches revealed challenges stemming from working with the faculty to leadership. A central difficulty faced was “a lack of [campus] communication.” The coaches shared that information was segmented, thus when changes occurred with students’ advisor assignments they often did not receive notice of the change. When departmental forms such as financial aid were being adjusted, there was no follow up to see how the Success Coaches received the information or how the changes impacted students. Finally, when the president’s cabinet disseminated information relevant to the coaching team weeks after it was received on campus, the delays were frustrating. One coach asserted, “We find [things] out incidentally.” The other coach continued by expressing a lack of collegiality and not having a degree of “authority” to accomplish a task rather than “having to go through the chain of command to [just] get stuff done.” Additionally the coaches noted that faculty members are not “putting the flags” into SAILS, which prevented the coaches from providing students with more timely intervention and support. These coaches shared that their campus is in need of developing a “culture
climate” of support for student success from the leadership down. As the two coaches make their “rounds” about the building in the morning to speak and greet their students offering what support they can, they too are looking for the leadership to provide the same type of communication with them as staff. They seek the courtesy of acknowledgment by the leadership staff and faculty when passed in the building.

Although they indicated “We vent to our supervisor” and the supervisor has shared their concerns with the leaders on campus, these matters remain unresolved.

Two other coaches expressed a concern with the lack of guidance and communication at the campus level that contributed to a less supportive climate. One coach mentioned “there hasn’t been a lot of oversight. There’s no supervisor or such on [my] campus” that has assisted in helping to understand the role of a Success Coach. The other coach compared the lack of guidance and communication from the campus program administrator to the VCCS central office. This lack of direct support impedes the full reach and potential for the Success Coach. On these three campuses, it appears campus communication is challenging and addressing this remains a daunting task.

Constraints. The coaches indicated four types of constraints experienced, they are: campus, student, personal, and cultural training. The two campus limitations expressed by C. T., Pie, and Sugar Mama are the lack of a cafeteria and events. Sugar Mama expressed when students come to campus, “they’re always hungry… [and] all we have are [vending machines with] potato chips and soda.” To help mediate this, on her campus they provide opportunities when students can get a hot meal. Being a small campus, she indicated being able to provide lunch at the coaches weekly workshops as
well as twice a week by dedicated staff bringing breakfast items and cooking them up while conducting a workshop for male students.

On his campus, C. T. indicated if there was a cafeteria students would “spend more time here.” C.T. also added a “lack of events” on campus hinders students being able to engage. Opportunities need to increase where “common free time [allows] for students to experience things together.” Furthermore, C. T. indicated lack of course availability stemming from limited sections hinders the scheduling process. These challenges result in student “disappointment” where they either abandon the program or program completion is extended.

The next limitation indicated was student ability. C. T. felt the degree of student deficiencies when entering community college are too vast to be addressed by two coaches. Even though there is a supportive faculty and staff, he felt “the magnitude of the problem severely handicaps the efforts.” He went on to share the need to garner volunteer support from “students and our community as a whole.”

Another limitation noted was by Brian. He felt the biggest challenge he faced is accepting he cannot rescue students from their own personal choices. To assist himself with this challenge, when the difficult consequences students experience surface, he focuses on “look[ing] at the potential of that student and… what they’re going to be when they get out of this.” Holding onto this “long-run picture” provides him with the ability to walk through this difficult place with students. As coaches acknowledged constraints whether campus, student, or personal they each sought ways to address them and lessen their impact.
The last constraint was revealed by Fuzz. One challenge she expressed was difficulty in understanding students' cultural differences. In her area, minorities are few and as a result her understanding of minority family dynamics is limited. Lack of personal knowledge and cultural training has hindered her ability to read cultural cues and discern "what's important to them." To compensate, she asks students questions to communicate to them the desire to understand and provide any support needed.

As Success Coaches sought to fulfill the duties of their job description and meet the needs of students, they faced several challenges. The most frequent challenges indicated hindering goal achievement were lack of communication, lack of direction, role confusion, budgetary restrictions, establishing their caseload, and campus communication. The less frequent challenges were campus dining facilities and events, cultural training, student deficiencies, and personal struggle. Despite the challenges faced, coaches continued to press forward to meet the needs of the students based on the knowledge they had and the resources available.

Summary

The CCSCI employed the use of Success Coaches as an intervention tool to promote student success, leading to persistence and ultimately degree/certificate attainment. Based upon the above findings, a number of key points emerged. In seeking to understand how the Success Coaches achieved the first three updated goals of the program, it was apparent that the Success Coaches sought to use their job description as a guide. This job description was no doubt created based on what is known to work well in the field and from research as well as looking to infuse elements into the job description based on what is emerging from academic coaching. As a result, all areas of practice
from the coaches’ job description, except for visiting SDV, were perceived and noted to support student success. Also coaches indicated areas of practice not on their job description that they perceived supported student success, key items were: non-academic resources, visiting the high schools, faculty-student relations, and academic advising.

As coaches moved forward in meeting the initiatives goals, by employing the elements of their job description as well as other components they deemed essential, they experienced areas of support as well as areas of challenge. The key supports were the collaborative nature woven among faculty, support services personnel, and the high school coaches as well as the location of the coaches’ office. Whereas the main challenges faced were being adrift due to the lack of communication and the lack of direction from the VCCS central office, which resulted in role confusion. Coaches were uncertain how to interpret their job, how to best meet the standards outlined for the program, and all but one employed academic advising which does not align with the coaching function. Although all coaches indicated students were assigned an academic advisor, there may be an advising capacity issue on the campus and the coaches are filling a gap which was not indicated during this study.

Despite role confusion, several elements of academic coaching were evident in the work done by the Success Coaches. Specifically, the work of the coaches regarding the academic plan, tutoring, SAILS, rapport, and hosting of workshops/activities all align with academic coaching. Additionally the coaches perceived other features of their work are best practice in the two-year sector and contribute to student success, these are: assistance with financial aid, collaboration with faculty, collaboration with student
services personnel, non-academic resources, faculty-student relations, visiting the high school, coach assignment.

The first cycle of the CCSCI has resulted in different interpretations as well as implementation at the institutional level, which makes comparison of program outcomes difficult. Despite these challenges, the CCSCI program has seen some success. Of note, across all colleges the average score exceeded the average 2010 baseline data. Also several of the institutions met one or more of the three goals. Yet, further examination of how the programs were implemented on the campuses that achieved the best results might provide a model for the program for other coaches and equipping coaches with targeted academic coaching training may assist in bringing the CCSCI into alignment across all participating institutions.
Chapter 6: Discussion

Everything we do is for them. [L]iterally, everything we do is for the students. [E]very phone call we make, every person we talk to is on behalf of [the] student...”

Sugar Mama, Success Coach

Within the higher educational landscape, community colleges have emerged as a fulcrum critical to addressing America’s educational promise for global competitiveness (Russell, 2011) and to increasing international ranking through degree attainment (ATD, 2013a). Up until recently, the place of community colleges at the proverbial table to discuss their role in supporting student success has been non-existent (White, 2010). Consequently, their rise in the national spotlight, specifically rural community colleges, has required a discussion of the support systems for underrepresented populations of students (URPs) attending community colleges that aid in promoting persistence to degree attainment for this group to fulfill (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Eddy, 2007, 2012; Katsinas, 2010). To this end, the outlook of America’s educational attainment is held in the hands of it rural community colleges (Katsinas, 2010) and in achieving success for URP (ATD, 2013b).

As a result, of these pressing issues, community colleges across the country are recognizing the need to create programming to achieve student success (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Green, 2006; VCCS, 2012a). In Virginia in fall 2012, the Virginia Community College System implemented the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative (CCSCI) that uses Success Coaches as an intervention to increase student persistence to degree/certificate attainment. The purpose of this study was to conduct a qualitative formative program evaluation of the CCSCI's
implementation at participating institutions. Data were collected from Success Coaches at six of the nine colleges in the initiative. This study sought to identify how the Success Coaches achieved the first three (revised) goals outlined in the Initiative, the supports and challenges the Success Coaches faced during implementation, and what they perceived as program strengths. As well, the study investigated how the perceived program strengths aligned with the emerging academic coaching literature. This chapter opens with the discussion of the findings with respect to the three research questions, followed by the Success Coaches’ recommendations for practical application. It then leads into implications for practice. Next, it elucidates items to consider for scaling up this type of change initiative. The chapter concludes by providing a framework for future evaluations and research that can further expand the breadth of community college research, more specifically that of rural community colleges and the role of academic coaching.

Discussion of Findings

The theoretical framework underlying this formative evaluation study examining the Success Coaches perspective of the CCSCI was change theory (Kotter & Cohen, 2002) as change is a part of any program implementation. Kotter and Cohen (2002) outlined the needed steps for organizational change, which includes the following steps: increasing a sense of urgency, building a core team, effectively communicating the vision and strategy, and thereby ensuring organizational acceptance, buy-in, celebrate short-term wins, which results in the change sticking. Although change theory undergirds this formative evaluation, the theoretical framework also includes the burgeoning concepts of academic coaching. Academic coaching differs from historic concepts of academic advising in higher education settings as coaching does not entail teaching students the
“institution’s mission, culture, and expectations” (NACADA, 2006, p. 2), providing students advice or direction, helping students with program and course selection, as well as scheduling students for classes (Brown, 2008). Rather, coaching is a co-created collaborative relationship using conversation to help students increase self-awareness, achieve established academic and personal goals, and maximize potential (NACADA, 2013; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011). Given the fact that the Chancellor’s initiative titled the support staff “Success Coaches,” it was important to understand how the initiative was influenced and reflected the new concepts of coaching in the implementation of the programming on the rural campuses. Discussed below are the findings related to each research question and to the program in its entirety.

Reviewing Implementation

Based on their individualized interpretation of the Success Coach job description provided as well as additional areas of practice employed, is an expansion of the findings below for each of the tactics the coaches employed to achieve the outcomes set forth in the initiative and for those perceived to support student success. Findings both agreed and contrasted with relevant research.

Academic plan. A component of the Success Coaches job required assisting students in developing an individualized academic plan. Based on findings in Chapter 5, coaches noted that the VCCS did not provide them with a template, to use in creating an individualized student academic plan. The lack of a common template, left coaches to individually interpret what components to include for planning purposes for students on their campuses. As a result, all but one individualized student academic plan sample provided to me and reviewed indicated the essential elements to support students’
academic and personal goals were absent. Despite being provided a copy, students were still placed in the position of having to recall their academic and personal goal information. Although some coaches highlighted how the academic planning documents contained elements such as course history indicating coursework taken, course mapping that reflects coursework needed for completion as well as, assessment results, and a transcript summary these specific elements were not evident on all plans. Beyond these course taking summaries and testing outcomes, the aspect of goal setting for students, which was espoused as one of the largest components of the coaching process, was not penned onto campus document for academic planning. Further, strategies to achieve the identified goals and a detailed action plan were absent from the academic planning documents. Leaving out these components of the planning form minimized the effectiveness of the academic coaching process.

These findings regarding how the coaches used the academic planning document do not align with best practices presented in the current literature on academic coaching. According to Robinson and Gahagan (2010), an academic plan expands beyond “traditional course mapping” (p.27). The plan “is a written document that helps students reflect on their current abilities and motivation in college; identify successful study strategies and potential challenges; establish a plan for future courses; and set strategic academic goals” (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 28), which equips students for their academic advisement meetings. The literature cites that subsequent coaching conferences are conducted for coaches and students, and student progress is monitored (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010).
In the findings from this research, the academic plan was used in a more basic manner and did not include goal setting or an action plan, both critical components in the coaching process. The relevant research regarding the definition for an academic plan emerged from a four-year institutional setting (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010), with no research in existence for academic coaching in a two-year environment. The definition of academic coaching (NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011) was crafted in an environment that differs from the two-year sector, but it is meant to be generic and to easily transfer and remain applicable to meeting the needs of community college students. But, the findings from this current study determined that the Success Coaches were not following an academic coaching model in developing academic plans with participating students. Missing from this process was the role of goal setting and an action plan.

As a visual tool, an academic plan is a fluid document that provides meaning, direction, and supports to students as elements are penned into the individual academic plan (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). This study found that no common planning document was used and that differences existed regarding the type of student assessment conducted on each campus. To provide uniformity of services to the student’s, coaches should be required to use the same self-assessments rather than leaving it to the discretion of the coach. In order for Success Coaches to maximize the academic coaching process and provide students a more usable visual tool, the academic plans should be revised to include: course mapping, self-assessment results, academic history, student goals (academic and career), identification of successful study strategies, as well as identification of potential challenges to goal achievement, and action items. Thus, even
though the coaches identified the academic plan as part their job description and an element important to use for student success, the lack of consistency in the application of the academic plan on each campus resulted in missing elements that could better support student success.

In addition to the variances in the academic planning document, the findings revealed seven of the eight coaches also conducted academic advising. Moreover, the findings uncovered the perception wherein six of the eight coaches embraced academic advising supported student success. Although the research indicates academic advising supports student success (Crockett, 1985; Hollis, 2009; Lowe & Toney, 200; Nealy, 2005), this oversight is a responsibility delegated to an academic advisor. A Success Coach is designated to coach not to conduct academic advisory duties and responsibilities. Therefore, even though the Success Coach perceived an element of the CCSCI program requires them to conduct academic advising, this type of support does not align with the coaching literature (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; IAC, 2010, 2011; ICF, 2013; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011). This misperception is linked to the lack of communication and lack of direction coaches received from the VCCS central office regarding how to operationalize the job description on campus and showcases the blurred boundaries of the coaching role as expressed by coaches during the recent October 2014 Workforce Academy meeting.

**Filing for financial aid and scholarships.** Goldrick-Rab (2010) acknowledged “student financial aid is the single largest investment governments make in community colleges” (p. 444). Moreover, this critical lever of support determines student access to postsecondary education, but is often underutilized by students most in need (Eddy, 2012;
Jehangir, 2010; Romano & Millard, 2006). As illustrated in the findings, the coaches all held similar interpretations regarding how they assist students with applying for financial aid and its importance with students’ ability to attend and maintain continual college enrollment thereby preventing students from stopping out (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Due to the complexity of financial aid processes, coaches reported serving as an interpreter for language utilized on financial aid forms, letters, and applications. Operationalizing this job duty required an additional layer of support by the coaches to provide students the opportunity for seamless “consistent progress in college” (Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p. 444). Since the FAFSA process has yet to be simplified, Success Coaches must be attune to the substantial informational requirements to ensure students are aware what coursework financial aid will fund. The coaches’ role in interpreting language and increasing student knowledge about the financial aid process all contributed to providing a significant form of support for participating students.

**Academic needs, links, and student management.** Aside from the semester planning meetings, coaches reported interaction with individual students occurred most often in conversations about SAILS. Recall, SAILS is an early alert system VCCS implemented in 2013. This type of early intervention tool coincides with the research that indicates the use of an early alert system quickly identifies academic student concerns that permits prompt response and intervention strategies employed whereby promoting increased student success (Laden, 2004). The SAILS report provided alerts every morning so coaches know “right off the bat…which students [they] need[ed] to call for the day” (Fuzz). Furthermore, Laden (2004) shared “an early alert system, combined with tutoring, time management, and study skills, may help address students’ academic
concerns, stress about expenses, financial difficulties, and problems resulting from family and work obligations" (p.17). Success Coaches looked to “close the loop” through SAILS by connecting students, as Laden (2004) suggested with the needed campus resources. One support coaches frequently used to aid students struggling academically that research has identified with supporting student success is tutoring (Henry, 2000; Jenkins, 2007; Thayer, 2000). Additionally, like Laden (2004) found, coaches recognized students may be in need of non-academic supports to meet with success and make the needed connections. Going beyond Laden (2004) suggestions of student supports, coaches used SAILS to address the whole student experience. For example, acknowledging students when they have done something well through a “kudos” note served as a powerful tool of positive reinforcement, strengthened the students’ emotional resources, broadened the coaches’ role as a support system, and promoted relationship with the student (Payne, 2005). However, it is important to note, that Selena used a traditional approach of email correspondence with the instructors, which may not provide the immediacy that the SAILS system does and may slow down the timeliness needed to respond with a needed intervention for the student. Understanding that students attending community college often do not come with a rigorous high school transcript and therefore are prone to struggle academically (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Green, 2006), the coaches’ ability to “catch” students early should increase the likelihood of students remaining and returning for the following semester (Laden, 2004).

**Using technology.** Despite the influence of the coaches on student success, a key finding of this research was the lack of accessibility and the cumbersome process for students to locate coaches as well as information pertaining to the CCSCI program using
the institution's website. As Millennial learners, students may become frustrated if they
do not have the technology systems in place to easily locate information about the
program and contact a coach. Restructuring of campus websites in such a way so that the
Success Coaching program is easily accessible, provides comprehensive program
information, and provides the name, picture, location, and contact information for each
coach would be beneficial to student outreach. Additionally, the use and form of
technology used by coaches should not be dictated by the personal preference of a coach,
but should be dictated by the student's "call for... greater use of technology" (Garza &

Non-academic resource link. Issues facing URP of students include a series of
external barriers, such as work and family demands, that often hamper their continuation
within the educational pipeline (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Kotamraju & Blackman, 2011).
The coaches in this research found their students no different from this norm.
Compounding barriers in rural communities are insufficient transportation, poverty, and
family attitudes toward education (Garza & Eller, 1998; Murray, 2007; Williams et al.,
2007). The coaches understood that poor, rural students have a particularly difficult time
with transportation issues given the general lack of public transportation and the rural
location of the campuses precludes walking to college for the most part. These matters
are further compounded by childcare needs, basic living needs, and family influence.
The coaches took the time to view students holistically, were attune to the impacts
external demand have, and extended resources available which is pivotal in maintaining
student continuance (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998; Gobin et al., 2012;
Murray, 2007; VCCS, 2012; Williams et al., 2007). These actions align with Maslow's
hierarchy of needs (Gobin et al., 2012; Maslow, 1970) as the basic needs of students must be met before they can engage meaningfully in academics. Because the coaches expressed we care, we want you here, and we want you to be successful, the coach-student relationship was strengthened (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; Gallwey, 2000; NACADA, 2014; Payne 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen Moran, 2010) as were the students' support systems and emotional resources (Payne 2005). Although this was outside of the coaches' job description, coaches helped students mitigate these barriers, so that the needed space for students to focus on their academics was created. What remains unknown is how these non-academic supports can be better addressed in the CCSCI and which of these resources leverage the most gain for students.

**Visiting SDV.** The coaches' job description indicates that the coaches must "visit" the SDV classes, but the findings indicated no clear adherence to this job requirement. The findings revealed only two coaches have "visited" SDV classes and these visits consisted of the coaches providing lessons to the students. At the time of the interview, only one of the two coaches above still visits the SDV classes and provides lessons as well as teaches SDV. Also, four coaches did not indicate visiting SDV classes. The lack of clarity over the coaching role manifested again with a total of four coaches tapped by institutional leadership as high as the college president to teach SDV. Clarification on how visiting SDV should be implemented on campus should offer coaches who are currently not visiting the needed framework to allocate their time and provide the needed direction to achieve program objectives. According to Robinson and Bloom (2009), a function of academic coaches has been to present academic success strategies to the student orientation classes. Presenting information on academic success
strategies to student orientation classes is vastly different than being required to assume
the role of an instructor for a course whereby the coach is responsible for developing
lesson plans, teaching class, grading papers, and holding office hours to service students
in the course, which exceeds their 200 student caseload requirement. These additional
duties for teaching SDV may be due to limited funding in the community colleges, which
results in treatment of Success Coaches like additional instructional staff and requiring
them to serve in additional capacities (Murray, 2007). This use of personnel
compromises the coaches' ability to devote full attention to their student caseload.

Student contact. This study found coaches reported different levels of student
engagement, which is an outcome of the lack of specificity in the job description
regarding the requirement of the coaches to engage with students on a regular basis.
Some coaches provided weekly student workshops that created the opportunity for
students to interact with members of the institution and from the community. More
specifically, coaches recognized the value and importance of faculty-student relations,
wherein workshops and activities provided opportunities for students to connect with
faculty within informal settings as well as through intentional introductions (Green, 2006;
Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). These interactions align with the research
regarding best practices as these workshops provide students an opportunity to expand
their net of support systems, access information and know how, decode the hidden rules
associated with higher education and society (Payne, 2005), and “negotiate [the] myriad
[of] unfamiliar cultural norms” (Green, 2006, p. 22). Furthermore these workshops
provide an environment for knowledge building, enhancing peer relations and
networking, and increasing social and cultural capital, which provides students with the
tools the research indicates supports their success in better navigating the educational landscape (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Pascarella et al., 2003). The campuses offering more regular workshops for students had better outcomes for students as measured by the first three goals evaluated by the VCCS. Based on these findings and the literature supported reasons, all coaches should consider conducting similar workshops to scaffold students (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Pascarella et al., 2003).

**Collaboration.** Coaches identified collaboration with faculty as instrumental in meeting the needs of their students. A range of forms of communication were evident among coaches and faculty members, for example through email, telephone, and personal conversations to discuss the needs and supports to promote student success. Furthermore, Success Coach worked with student services personnel to provide students access to college resources and additional forms of support. Research documents the role of collaboration with faculty and student support professionals with programs to increase student success (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh, 1996; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Martin & Murphy, 2000; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). As Fuzz aptly expressed, “It takes everybody.” Success Coaches intuitively understood the importance of establishing and building collaborative ties as well as bridges of connectivity with faculty and student services personnel expands students’ campus networks and increases access to information and know how supporting positive student outcomes (Green, 2006; Payne, 2005).

Aside from collaborating with institutional members, some Success Coaches went outside of the scope of their responsibilities and extended themselves to the high school
Career Coach. As coaches support students along their academic and personal journey, the research cites the importance of rapport between coach-students as they work through collaborative conversation towards goal achievement (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; Gallwey, 2000, IAC, 2010; ICF 2013; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen Moran, 2010). This co-created collaborative relationship can begin being cultivated by coaches reaching down to graduating seniors on Career Coach’s caseload and visiting high schools (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

Increased urgency. In reviewing the change model (Kotter & Cohen, 2002), it is evident that the Chancellor has increased a sense of urgency with the Success Coaches regarding student degree attainment at the VCCSs smallest rural community colleges by employing Success Coaches as an intervention tool. Further, a guiding team within the central office to drive the change effort was created, along with a compelling vision document (VCCS, 2012). Yet, the proposed transformation cannot move forward until the missing elements within getting the vision right and communicating for buy-in are enacted. Once done, the rest of the change model steps can be employed. The remaining steps to complete include clearly communicating the change process and vision which encompasses the strategic plan to key stakeholders, which include the college presidents, and success coaches located in the trenches. Consequently, this action of communication may provide key stakeholders the needed direction to clear clogged communication channels that are currently resulting in confusion on the ground and are impeding a clear path to program implementation. As a result of clearer communication channels, it will empower campus leaders to effectively communicate the vision and strategy of the CCSCI to the remaining campus community in an effort to garner increased support from
faculty and student services personnel. Additionally, clarity will permit it to be seen as a campus-wide initiative and not one led by a few. Furthermore, this clarity would better inform the college presidents regarding the intended role of the Success Coach which should realign their current functionality with their job description. This wave of clarity coupled with vision’s strategic steps should result greater action on the ground. The implications for practice outlined later in this chapter for the Chancellor and the central office is the continuance and the completion of the remaining steps in the change model (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Central to this process is ensuring Success Coaches have adequate ongoing training infused (Fowler, 2009) and additional duties and responsibilities are removed.

Supports and Challenges of Success Coaches

This study focused on the role of the Success Coach and sought to obtain feedback from the coaches on their experiences, and what they identified as the supports, and challenges facing them as they sought to meet the goals outlined in the CCSCI. Furthermore, in discussing the supports and challenges below, it is necessary to understand that a program is merely a policy that has been enacted (Fowler, 2009). It is with this understanding, that the words program and policy are interchangeably used in this section.

Supports. Coaches indicated four levels of collaboration they felt most beneficial in furthering their role as a Success Coach, namely working with faculty, student services personnel, high school career coaches, and other Success Coaches. In addition, the coaches’ physical location on campus central to other support services office created key linkages that support their roles in working with URP students. Research acknowledges
the important role collaboration in higher education serves to increase effectiveness and productivity (Johnson, 1998; Kezar, 2006; Leonard & Leonard, 2001). Furthermore, the literature supports how the outcomes of these collaborative relationships builds resources for students, fosters a sense of community for students, broadens the support system net for students, provides a sense of connectivity for students, encourages academic achievement, and equips students to begin establishing relationships to further their cultural and social capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Pascarella et al., 2003; Payne, 2005). The coaches confirmed that these positive outcomes were occurring on their campus. Mary asserted “being able to collaborate with them without competing... that’s good.” Mary viewed this collaboration was beneficial for her and the faculty, but most of all for the students. In addition to the four-prongs of collaboration, the findings revealed the Success Coaches’ location on campus was important and provided ease of access to campus supports. Whether in the “main hub” with campus support services or nearby, proximity of these one-stop shops being established on community college campuses helped students (Knopp, 2001; Walters, 2003). The benefit of this centralized model is in improving customer service by maximizing student time on campus by centrally locating essential departments such as enrollment, financial aid, and student services in one local rather than scattered across campus (Knopp, 2001; Walters, 2003). For students who are new to the college environment, this can ease the matriculation process and minimize the intimidation factor (Walters, 2003). This research found that the Success Coaches were using key resources, both human and physical, identified as important in the literature to help support their students. As a result, the coaches were able to leverage their work with students in
positive ways. Sarah shared her campus location permitted for a number of resources to be accessible, "right there... at [your] fingertips." Despite the supports coaches perceived, they also felt challenged in their roles.

Challenges. Some of the challenges the coaches experienced were the lack of communication and the lack of direction from the VCCS central office. As a result, role confusion emerged that prevented the coaches from meeting program standards and functioning as an academic coach. The coaches revealed that they felt these challenges occurred due to the swift program implementation in which they "were expected to hit the ground running pretty quickly," and they were provided "very limited feedback." No coach's manual or outline currently exists and no formal coaching training has been provided, leaving the coaches to feel, "there was still not a clear understanding of what are we doing and how [they] want[ed] us to do it." Coupled with this lack of understanding over their role was a lack of specificity regarding program data collection.

These challenges expressed by the coaches are common occurrences when first implementing a new program or initiative (Fowler, 2009). In order to promote a change effort, it is vital that the VCCS recognizes "clear channel[s]" of communication are critical, because without them "[they] can't influence feelings and create needed behavior" at the institutional level (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 90). Furthermore, as the guiding team, the VCCS, cannot remain in the posture of not responding in a timely manner to the coaches' questions and providing needed direction, as the change literature indicates a "well-functioning guiding team answers the questions required to produce a clear sense of direction. [The result of providing the coaches with] good answers to the[ir] questions [better] positions an organization to leap into a better future" (Kotter &
Cohen, 2002, p. 61). In order to move the vision of the CCSCI forward, clearer direction and communication should emit from the VCCS central office regarding the program, the new coaching map, and the coaches’ role. If these adjustments do not occur, then the program will not achieve its innate potential.

The literature on policy implementation notes that “training is necessary just before [program] implementation begins” (Fowler, 2009, p. 293), and that “implementation… should begin only after a solid foundation has been laid…” (Fowler, 2009, p. 294). The literature further indicates leaders must provide “a strategy [which] shows how to achieve a vision [and the] plan [which] specifies step by step how to implement [the] strategy” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 68). As one of the coaches offered, when your outcomes are based on an [unclear] expectation… it’s not going to look pretty when the results come out. Because when each college is doing it a different way and there’s no… no clear decision across the board… I don’t think that the VCCS clearly communicated that out and answered some questions that were left lingering multiple times, multiple locations.

As evident from the Success Coaches’ perspective, the implementation of the CCSCI came up short in both these areas. The new strategy lacked specificity for the coaching role and did not provide adequate time for training to achieve the most success.

Two critical components for policy implementation are time and resources (Fowler, 2009). These components permit for building of the knowledge base and skill development required for successful implementation (Fowler, 2009). And, after a program begins, it is critical for those implementing the program on the ground to receive support and assistance (Fowler, 2009). Not only should the VCCS provide clearer
direction and communication to the coaches regarding their role and strategies for implementation, so too should there be scaffolding for the Success Coaches with appropriate resources and time to attain the essential academic coaching knowledge, skills, and techniques. A well-thought out plan on how coaches can fulfill their role will ultimately promote more student success and definitively the successful accomplishment of the vision of the CCSCI.

The lack of communication and direction from the VCCS for the coaches resulted in role confusion. Role confusion was evident for the coaches from the inception of the program when “many success coaches [were] still figuring out their role in assisting students within all of the other student support structures” (VCCS, 2013, p. 1). Confusion was magnified due to the currently embedded function of academic advising as a component of academic coaching and the teaching SDV courses. The additional job duties of conducting enrollment for the institution, conducting tutoring, overseeing SAILS for their campus, serving on committees, and part-time assignment of the Success Coaches to the CCSCI program all contributed to lack of clarity over the primary role for the coaches.

Role confusion was further exacerbated during the October 2014 Workforce Academy meeting. Here, the Program Director asked coaches to identify program categories they perceived as a strength or a challenge and the coaching category “enrollment/scheduling” was provided and in turn reported as a successful program category conducted. But, academic advising does not align with the role of academic coaches (Brown, 2008; ICF, 2013; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011). Often in the literature the words “counseling,” “advising,” and “coaching” are
intertwined and used interchangeably, yet in reality they are not synonymous; rather, these terms are distinctly different and should be treated as such (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; ICF, 2013; Steel & McDonald, 2008; Webberman, 2011). Research further clarifies there is a clear demarcation in the literature between academic coaching and academic advising (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; IAC, 2010, 2011; ICF, 2013; Webberman, 2011).

The literature on academic coaching does not include the wide range of duties currently being done by the Success Coaches (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; IAC, 2010, 2011; ICF, 2013; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). Moreover, many of these coaching assignments are in direct conflict with the CCSCI technical document that clearly indicates each campus was to have “two full-time (restricted)” Success Coaches and that the Success Coaches’ work “must be in direct support of students in the target population” that are participating in the CCSCI program (VCCS, 2012, pp. 1-2). Additional, the change literature indicates if the VCCS does not “set clear direction… the consequences can be catastrophic for organizations and painful for employees” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 62). The effects of disorganization are already evident based upon the perceptions gathered from the coaches and the mixed message sent during the Workforce Academy meeting over the coaching role. Clarity regarding the coaching role should occur at the VCCS central office level with the guiding team so that it can be properly communicated to the campus leadership and Success Coaches.

With Success Coaches being the newest coaching program developed, the findings indicated that establishing as well as maintaining the student caseload of 200 students per campus can be challenging. The campus websites of the participating
colleges reflected that minimal web presence exists about the Success Coaches or information about the CCSCI. Importantly, one of the components of the coaching conversation map introduced to the Success Coaches in the October 2014 Workforce Academy was about marketing (Kemp, 2014). Marketing would provide information using a range of activities to inform students, faculty, and staff about the CCSCI program, the Success Coach’s services, how students can benefit from working with a Success Coach, and how the campus community can contribute to the work of the Success Coach (Kemp, 2014).

**Academic Coaching**

This research sought to determine how the elements the Success Coaches perceived supported student success align with the emerging academic coaching literature. According to the findings, the items identified by Success Coaches for student success included: development of an academic plan, tutoring, assistance with applying for financial aid, collaboration with faculty, collaboration with student services personnel, workshops/activities, rapport, and the early alert SAILS system. The elements that the coaches perceived help support student success that align with coaching literature are: academic plan (Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010), tutoring (NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010), workshops/activities (Robinson & Bloom, 2009), rapport (Gallwey, 2000, IAC, 2010; ICF 2013; NACADA, 2014; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen Moran, 2010) and SAILS (Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010), all of which were discussed in detail earlier in the chapter. Thus, the coaches are fulfilling many of the key tenets of academic coaching.
The following findings align with relevant research, but not specifically coaching literature, in supporting student success: assistance with financial aid (Eddy, 2012; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Romano & Millard, 2006), collaboration with faculty as well as student services personnel (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh, 1996; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Martin & Murphy, 2000; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994), non-academic resources (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998; Gobin et al., 2012; Murray, 2007; VCCS, 2012; Williams et al., 2007), visiting the high schools (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006), and faculty-student relations (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). These supports were also elaborated on in the previous sections. The evidence of these factors as critical for supporting student success signifies that these practices should be more formally recognized as support structures for URP of students. To this end, these emerging findings undergird that in order to improve student outcomes, coaches need more time with students and more time to act as a bridge for students with faculty as well as with student services personnel. Consequently, this will call for any additional duties and responsibilities delegated to Success Coaches that are outside of the scope of their job description to be eliminated. Although it is typical in the community college sector, and more so in the rural sector for faculty and staff to wear multiple hats, such cannot occur if the work of the grant is to be done and improved student outcomes are expected.

An additional finding is coaches perceived supported student success was academic advising. Yet, as mentioned earlier research cites there is a clear distinction between academic coaching and academic advising (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; IAC, 2010, 2011; ICF, 2013; Webberman, 2011). Coaches still intensely cling and are holding
fast to academic advising and its role with supporting student success. The application of academic advising will continue to be perpetuated by the coaches until VCCS adequately clarifies the Success Coaches' position and functionality. One reason coaches may hold the purpose of academic advising so tightly to their coaching function is the need on their rural campuses for more advising capacity. The coaches may be filling in a void not available on campus, but one that they know is linked to student success. More coordination with the student service area overseeing academic advising may provide a strategy for completing the advising function and allowing coaches to focus more on their own roles in supporting students. At this juncture, the VCCS should draw a line in the proverbial sand and decide whether they are going to align with a coaching philosophy or an advising philosophy. If the intent is coaching, then only coaching should occur, whereas if the intent is advising, then the job title needs to be adjusted to Success Advisor. Actions, words, and deeds should align.

Status Check on Change

A gap was discovered between the change model (Kotter & Cohen, 2002) and the implementation of the CCSCI program at the participating institutions. The study revealed a critical need for increased communication and direction. According to Fowler (2009), leaders must never take program implementation for granted and must remain actively involved. Furthermore, mere motivation fostered when creating a sense of urgency is good, but not sufficient for the program implementation process (Fowler, 2009; Kotter & Cohen, 2002). The VCCS's guiding team has experienced a change in leadership and recently named a new program director August 2014. The timing of the September and October adjustment of CCSCI program outcomes might be related to this
leadership change and the background knowledge the new director brings to the position. As these adjustments have been made, so too should the guiding team consider revising the current technical document on the CCSCI to include an expanded strategic document outlining how the program should be implemented at the institutional level and clarifying the Success Coach’s job description (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Establishing a common framework at all participating institutions and a common language among stakeholders, leaders, and coaches can help improve communication among coaches and in the system.

The first time the Success Coaches learned about their program outcomes occurred at the public reporting of the CCSCI snapshot of institutional outcomes at the 2014 Workforce Academy. But, we know that “good communication is not just data transfer [but entails ongoing monitoring and feedback]” (Fowler, 2009; Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 84). The group meeting should have not been the first time the Success Coaches were made aware of their programs’ status. Instead, in order to promote a viable program implementation, it is important for the program director to visit institutional sites frequently as well as remaining in constant regular communication with the Success Coaches (Fowler, 2009). This ebb and flow of sharing information should provide the space for the program director to maintain a finger on the pulse of the program progress, resulting in the ability to be more proactive rather than reactive in resolving the normal problems that arise during implementation (Fowler, 2009). Additionally, increased communication and feedback would permit the Success Coaches to quickly address and resolve emerging issues.

The study revealed the process of the Success Coaches fulfilling their job description was weakened due to lack of communication, lack of direction, as well as
lack of time and resources provided. As a result of these findings, the VCCS should consider developing the needed documents to streamline the implementation process and ensure the same process and management of the program is mirrored at each of the institutions. As the VCCS looks to recalibrate and bring the CSCCI program into alignment with academic coaching, development of such documents such as a template of an individualized academic plan, an outline of what is to be covered when visiting SDV classes, and a template for the intake form are needed. In addition to uniformed documents, the same consistency should occur for self-assessments used to measure student progress. Moreover, other self-assessments used in academic coaching such as the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) as well as the StrengthsQuest StrengthsFinder, which provide the student and the coach with a more complete picture and assist in the academic coaching process, should be considered (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). To this end, the VCCS will need to devote time, resources, and professional development as well as training on academic coaching for the Success Coaches which can contribute to removing barriers currently felt by the coaches and create the needed momentum to move the change process forward (Fowler, 2009; Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

Success Coaches Recommendations for Practical Application

During this study, coaches were asked to provide suggestions for improving the CCSCI. The six most frequently suggested items coaches provided were: clarity of position; job manual; training; collaboration opportunities; program branding; and a knowledge management system. For a comprehensive listing of all items see Appendix S. As coaches have entered the second funding cycle, they are looking for clarity and consistency regarding their role as a Success Coach. Mary passionately shared, “if we
could get a focused leadership and to communicate specific expectation with this new grant cycle” it would help to get everyone on the same page and “see a change.” C. T. indicated,

I would like the VCCS to standardize how they roll things out. I think it would be good policy to try to – so that a campus has to be oriented and told, “This is what’s going to happen and these are the parameters and then this is the range of adaptability that you have to your campus. So please follow this.” I do think it’s hard to win people over to what you’re doing when you’re not quite sure. So the more solidified the program becomes, the easier it will be for us to help people understand exactly what we’re doing.

Moreover, Mary built on C. T.’s sentiments that there is a need to define who we are in terms of roles, duties, responsibilities, and trying to keep this- nine schools on the same page and accountable for that- accountable for doing the work of the grant. Because it’s a little unfair to expect coaches who have now been deemed the advisors for the campus to have any data to report on coaching.

In fact, some coaches specifically stated the clarity and direction should be provided by the Chancellor. “Maybe he needs to say it. This is the expectation from the Systems office: That X, Y, and Z occur, and this is the deadline for it happening, in terms of the Success Coach program.” As the leader for the organization, having the Chancellor take the helm in articulating the needed clarity, direction, and expectation would aid coaches in understanding “exactly what he’s looking for.”
As coaches are desperately seeking clarity and direction from dialogue with leadership, the development of a Success Coach manual was mentioned as a needed tool. At this juncture, Sugar Mama noted “There’s no formal outline. If I left today and... new people came in, there’s nothing for them to follow. Absolutely nothing for them to pick up and say, “okay, I’m suppose to do this, this, and this.” C. T. shared, “I think having some kind of manual for the program [will] to be very helpful.” The manual would provide the overview from the leadership conversation along with stipulated policies and procedures. Furthermore, it would be a reference for current and new coaches. Aside from emerging during the interviews, the request for clarity defining their role and responsibility also surfaced during the fall 2014 Workforce Academy meeting.

The third suggestion, which also surfaced in the coaches Workforce Academy meeting, was for the VCCS to provide targeted coaching training/professional development. In addition to stating, “We need more Success Coach-specific professional development.” Sugar Mama noted, “We [also] need some sort of certification to give us that extra credential. There needs to be some measure established whereby everybody is held accountable for the program.” Building off of Sugar Mama’s suggestion, Fuzz shared

I hate to say it but this conference has really grown and it’s more general knowledge than it is targeted information for specific programs. So yeah, it’s great for us to come here. However I feel like if we had a more focused, targeted just for certain groups [like us], it would be more beneficial.

Encompassed in their targeted professional development, Selena indicated, “Having some more training on how to really go about in depth, I guess, to reach our students a little bit
more, I think that would be helpful.” Coaches recognize the training received to date is not sufficient for the task at hand as many made a show of hands at the Academy meeting desiring coaching certification and targeted training topics.

As coaches raised the suggestion for their personal growth, they acknowledged the enriching learning opportunity through collaboration. During the interviews as well as during the coaches’ Academy meeting, an increased collaboration opportunity amid the Success Coaches was suggested as vital. Selena replied, “I guess all the coaches just need to come together and share their ideas with each other.” Moreover, Fuzz emphatically stated, “We definitely need to collaborate more. I think there is a plethora of ideas that are floating around out there, great practices, [and] best practices” needing to be harnessed. What the coaches suggested was a designated time to learn from one another and discuss best practices during regional meetings.

Directly tied to increased opportunities for coaches to collaborate, was the suggestion for the VCCS to provide a knowledge management system. Again, this too bubbled up as a request to support the coaches during the 2014 Academy meeting. Mary indicated this system would be

something where you know of course like best practices, the weekly workshops let’s say I do in a template where you [could access it.] Where we could actually or we could share our best practices[ideas, and activities] like in a warehousing type situation where any coach from any other program or any other school could actually access it. And see that would demonstrate return on investment to the grantor that we now have a knowledge management system.
The last frequent suggestion was creating program branding. Since “you have continually new staff and faculty coming in” Mary shared, there is a need to educate them on what we do. Not only do the faculty and staff need to become more knowledgeable about who the Success Coaches are, what is the CCSCI program, and what the coaches do, but so do the students. Sarah noted,

Right now students still don’t know it [the CCSCI] exists when they walk on campus. But I would love to get to the point where people are actually coming to me and saying, “Hey, I heard you have this program. I’d like to be involved.” Program branding lends itself to this need as it provides people with “something that they can see.” Sarah stated in a matter of fact manner,

I guess if you boil it down, I want something to slap on a t-shirt and a cup that I can hand out to students and people in the community when I go places to present on this program. Something they can sit on their desk and say, “Oh yeah, that girl’s there who can help the student do this” and here’s her contact info that she also conveniently placed on this cup that she gave me.

By establishing program branding, it will aid the campus community in having a clear understanding of the CCSCI and be able to accurately distinguish it from other campus programs.

Success Coaches provided suggested recommendations for the CCSCI program improvement, that are centered around understanding their role, garnering the needed resources, training, and tools to properly equip them as coaches, as well as leveraging the collaborative partnerships to ultimately support student success. The items discussed above are in need of being swiftly addressed as the void of clarity and training is directly
impacting the program. When coaches are provided with a clearer understanding of their job and are afforded the essential coaching training, as well as resources to truly equip them as an academic coach, they will more apt to function and align with the nuances of academic coaching rather than academic advising (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh, 1996; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Martin & Murphy, 2000; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994; Webberman, 2011). With this backdrop of support, coaches could provide students with the needed scaffolding to increase student cultural and social capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Pascarella et al., 2003; Payne, 2005). It is evident that the coaches are seeking clarity of direction, time, training, and resources which clearly align with the change model to gain the needed wave of momentum in moving the change process forward and getting change to stick (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

Implications for Practice

Several implications for practice emerged from this research. The following points are outlined by the stakeholders. The key stakeholders in the CCSCI are the Chancellor/Central Office, campus leaders, and Success Coaches. Although not a key stakeholder, campus faculty, and students maintain a stakeholder position. The proposed are easily adoptable and can be accomplished in the remaining timeline in the second cycle of the program.

Chancellor/central office. As the Chancellor and central office look to recalibrate, and bring the CCSCI back into alignment, it is critical for leadership to navigate through the steps of the change model in order to “make [the] change stick” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 161). The needed steps begin with better clarity regarding the
implementation of the vision of the CCSCI so that leadership can leverage the “gut-level” merit campus leaders and Success Coaches see within this program (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 83). Central office leadership should provide the needed clarity and communicating with meaningful words backed by aligning deeds. Campus leaders and Success Coaches need to hear leadership state, “We need your help and support, just as we will do everything to give you our help and support” followed by seeing leadership extend themselves to carry out this promise (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 95). Wherein times past, the words of promise returned void of action and trust has been broken. By following through with intentional actions, it will speak volumes to campus leaders and Success Coaches, which can promote increased buy-in.

Through creating the space for the needed buy-in, it is critical for central office to publically acknowledge and celebrate the small wins resulting from the Success Coaches first cycle of program implementation. Although only two out of the nine institutions met the three first updated goals, many of the institutions exceeded one or more of their baseline, which is meaningful as campus leaders and Success Coaches are trailblazers within the community college sector (Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 2014). Timely visible acknowledgement of early wins is essential (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Capitalizing on these small successes, can aid in building the needed momentum as well as provide the platform for valid feedback to remove barriers. To minimize negative feelings and cultivate positive ones, it vital for leadership to paint a mental picture to aid campus leaders and Success Coaches to “see the possibilities [the CCSCIs impact on their students and their campuses... [and] generate a feeling of faith
[that they are instrumental in this occurring and supported by central office] (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 112).

Once leadership has the change direction and momentum moving forward, leadership cannot let up. The sense of urgency that led to the inception of the CCSCI, must abide. Leadership must be willing to provide an environment to address the inevitable “difficult bureaucratic and political problems [at the institutional level with campus leaders]” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 146). During the initial implementation, addressing local politics and accountability with human resources and project funding was “too tough to handle” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 150). Yet, to keep the change effort moving forward to fulfill the vision, crucial conversations must occur.

It is in these crucial conversations, the VCCS must assert and leverage its role as a system. As a system, it often manages numerous programs and initiatives simultaneously. In particular, as the CCSCI was underway, so too was the redesign of the developmental math programs. Nevertheless, the VCCS maintains governance and allocates program funding. The coaches have indicated they are looking to the Chancellor/central office to provide the needed oversight and direction to guide the CCSCI forward. Due to the distance between the campuses and central office, technology should be harnessed to communicate the Chancellor’s “simple and heartfelt [message]” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 101) to bring about seamless consistency needed. In the program’s current state with the lack of standardization across participating institutions, it hampers the ability to examine treatment validity of current and long term program outcomes. With limited time remaining in this second funding cycle, it is critical to bring about the needed consistency to be able to study the treatment validity
and ascertain what elements of the initiative best supports student success. If the VCCS does not capitalize on this opportunity, it will miss the opportunity to capture rich data to better inform practice.

Moreover, the display of central office’s power should be evident by investing into the Success Coaches with the “time, resources, and access [to the tools to properly equip them in their position]” (Kotter & Cohen, p. 147). In order to provide coaches with the needed elements of time, resources, and access the central office should procure the needed funding to provide coaching certification training as well as ongoing professional development. With half of the second cycle almost elapsed, timely certification training for Success Coaches to build their knowledge base and skill development is critical to becoming more effective in this latter portion of the second cycle. Moreover, given the high level of turnover among the coaches, codifying what is working at the campus level would provide the opportunity to garner potential strategies.

To aid in making this organizational change stick, the culture of the VCCS and the shared beliefs must be continually and clearly conveyed (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). A visual briefly noting the key points could be send to participating campuses to post in intentional areas for campus members to view. Additionally, these key points could be communicated during central office meetings with campus leaders as well as when with Success Coaches, through monthly newsletters, or through monthly technology bytes emailed that could be viewed. Tapping into the feelings and the emotions by vividly telling campus leaders and Success Coaches to remember why they do what they do and how they are impacting students’ lives through the CCSCI is necessary. To this end, central office should recognize the change process is not lockstep, but rather there is
often overlap between stages. More importantly, it is being attune to the stage(s) in order to navigate and guide the process successfully.

**Campus leaders.** As campus leaders are navigating the CCSCI at the ground level, there are three implications for practice. The first area for practice is housing the Success Coaches and other coaching programs as well as the student services personnel in the same location or near one another. Due to the nature of the Success Coaches position, when housing the programs consideration of the Success Coach maintaining a private space should be contemplated. As the VCCS has expressed the desire to provide more *wrap around services* and *soft handoffs*, the recommended physical space configuration would better promote this occurrence. Yet, as the experiences of one coach illustrated, being located with the faculty can also result in great success. On smaller campuses such as for this coach, proximity already exists with support offices too given institutional size. It is the medium and larger rural campuses wherein location should be more closely examined and considered. Consideration of the location of support offices in one common area provides students access to an array of services within a one-stop shop setting (Knopp, 2001; Walters, 2003). Moreover, proximity would promote the opportunity for increased collaboration.

The second area of practice involves financial aid knowledge. With URP of students often in need of financial aid in order to attend school (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Jehangir, 2010), it is imperative for coaches assisting them to be continually cognizant of the application process as well as any updated changes. To do so, ongoing training is needed. Additionally, coaches are in need of being able to accurately translate forms, letters, procedures, and processes in such a way that students understand as well as learn
about processes so that students too can advocate for themselves. This assistance would also include aiding students in understanding how to maintain full Pell funding as well as how to manage the monies so that they have enough to purchase books and materials for class. As a lever determining students’ ability to attend or continue attending, this support is critical.

The third area of practice entails clearly communicating the CCSCI to the campus community. This campus conversation should dispel misconceptions pertaining to the program, clarify the role of the Success Coach, and paint a picture to help each campus member recognize their role in the success of this program. This type of campus communication should occur regularly and through various mediums. Additionally, any professional development needed to equip campus members should be provided, such as training on the use of the early alert system, SAILS.

Success coaches. As coaches seek to meet the requirements of the CCSCI, there are three implications for practice. The first area of practice involves the act of reaching across the aisle to faculty members. This entails Success Coaches going to the faculty departments to meet with individual faculty to gain a working knowledge of the programs offered. By making the personal contact, can help build relationships and trust among faculty and coaches. As changes occur with program curriculum, coaches would meet with the appropriate departments to assure they know how to translate this information for students and can help identify in advance any areas of concern that might arise for students. This practice seeks to build communication, connectivity, and rapport with the faculty as well as ensures coaches are accurately sharing program information with students during their coaching conversations.
The second implication for practice is the integration among the coaches and sharing of program offerings, including workshops or activities, would be beneficial. Targeted student workshops such as: time-management, study skills, test taking skills, stress management, resume writing, interviewing skills, understanding the college culture, academic success strategies, identifying essential campus personnel along with their role at the institution and how they can provide the student support, career planning, health and wellness, money management/budgeting, scholarship information and financial aid can bolster student social and cultural capital (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Pascarella et al., 2003). By hosting monthly meetings to discuss programming, it also lends itself as a support system for one another.

The third area of practice requires coaches to take a multidimensional approach when working with their students and the ability to provide students with non-academic resource links. As a result, coaches should employ a needs assessment with entering student participants and encourage them identify “external commitments or external needs that have the potential to impact their academic performance or their persistence” (Fusch, 2012, par. 6). This needs assessment provides the opening for the coaching conversation to occur and the space for the coach to share how they can support them as a whole student, academically and personally. The coaches’ ability to connect students to campus as well as community resources may make the critical difference between a student staying in school versus becoming a drop-out (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998; Williams et al., 2007). Moreover, coaches should provide resource information in print as well as electronically, as it increases student accessibility and timeliness to attaining needed academic and non-academic resources.
**Campus faculty.** Even though the Success Coaches are referred to as an intervention to promote student success, the campus faculty through collaboration too play a pivotal role in supporting this program seeking to bolster student success (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh, 1996; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Martin & Murphy, 2000; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). The two implications for practice are SAILS and curriculum changes. The first area of practice is, understanding the value of an early alert system in supporting timely student intervention (Laden, 2004) and then consistently using the early alert system, SAILS. Each faculty should be able to navigate SAILS, raise a student flag, as well as send a “kudos” note. Timeliness in raising a flag is critical to the Success Coach providing intervention. Moreover, sending “kudos” notes should be done regularly. The power of a note of praise, recognition for a job well done, or appreciation for effort goes a long way in impacting students.

The second area of practice is communication. There are two facet of communication that should occur, programmatic changes and students in need. Since Success Coaches discuss course mapping in their conversations with students (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010), it is critical they are notified when curriculum adjustments transpire and how these changes impact the students they serve. As the most frequent point of contact that students may have within a week, faculty should also communicate with the Success Coach when it appears a student may be in need of a non-academic resource. Despite the desire to attend college, rural community college students often have many demands and obstacles aside from potentially needing academic support (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Green, 2006), which may hamper attendance and persistence (Engle &
Tinto, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998; Williams et al., 2007). Faculty prompt notification to a Success Coach, can aid in potentially garnering the needed student support.

**Students.** As students navigate the educational pipeline, their Success Coach is an intervention to provide them with support, however there are three implications for practice that students should embrace to take more ownership in their postsecondary process. The first area of practice is for students to utilize and manage a planner. This is an organizational tool that can help students better manage their academic and personal time. Their coach can aid them initially setting the planner for each semester and provide checks to ensure it is being properly managed. As a life skill, it is important that students cultivate this tool.

The second implication for practice is for students to maintain a reflection journal. Within the journal, students would indicate times of progress and growth along their educational journey (Donner & Wheeler, 2009). These brief entries can be a picture communicating an experience or information written. As a result, it will “provide [students with] tangible evidence of personal discoveries throughout the process [and serve as a method of encouragement]” (Donner & Wheeler, 2009, p. 22).

The last area of practice for students is for students to provide coaches with feedback. Since academic coaching is a co-created collaborative relationship, it is vital for students to communicate to coaches what has been helpful, and what has not, as well as suggestions for improvement. This feedback could be provided anonymously on a feedback card or in person if the student so desires. It is through this retooling process that can not only enhance students learning to advocate for themselves, but can also further equip coaches in knowing how to better meet the needs of their students.

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**Items That Could Be Scaled Up**

Although the CCSCI is still nascent and in the process of recalibrating to further enhance program alignment, identifying promising practices to scale up is desirable. The scaling up process entails expanding program components to multiple settings (Fowler, 2009). At this juncture, I would contain the scaling up to encompass the nine participating institutions and then re-evaluate their effectiveness at the close of this second funding cycle. There are four potential items to consider scaling up the program on the nine participating campuses, these are: Success Coach webpage, program branding, student handbook/planner/journal, and workshop curriculum.

The first item for scaling up consideration is for each campus to create a Success Coach Webpage would be instrumental in not only marketing their program, but create a sense of uniformity across participating institutions. Additionally, it would provide students with essential and timely information. Since student time on campus is limited (Engle & Tinto, 2008) and coaches need to better establish their presence on campus, coaches should have an informational Webpage off of the institution’s website so students can access the resource links, obtain coaches’ contact information, and view a calendar events.

Since the VCCS looks to further expand the Success Coach model, consideration for establishing program branding is vital. As academic coaching is distinctively different than the other coaching programs on campus and support services available to students, branding would make the needed distinction. The development of a program logo and motto would further increase program legitimacy and communicate the CCSCI is a program that will remain embedded in VCCS.
A third consideration for scaling up, is to provide students when they become participants in the CCSCI, a student handbook/planner/journal would provide them success tools as they embark upon their educational journey. The cover would have the program logo and motto. The handbook would consist of success strategy tips, a listing of frequently asked questions or concerns that arise for students and they appropriate answer, a description of key campus offices that can assist them, non-academic resource links, and an outline of student milestones to be completed from enrollment to graduation. The planner portion would be an academic planner for the year. The coach would be able to provide the student with the support in utilizing the planner. The journal would be for the academic year with entry space per month, and could be a tool used during coaching sessions. After the academic year is complete, students should have increased their understanding of time-management, knowledge of campus resources, grown in the reflection process. It can then be maintained as a continual resource.

The last consideration for scaling up is, developing a curriculum of student workshop topics. These modules could be developed by the current coaches and then maintained as an electronic resource that can be continually updated. This resource would be instrumental in supporting newly hired coaches as they seek to establish the program on their campus as well as a support to current coaches of potential workshop topics to consider. In practice, the scaling up initiatives requires leaders to recognize this is a “challenging process” (Fowler, 2009, p. 282) and therefore cannot be entered into lightly. Rather, consistent planning, oversight, and guidance are required to implement successful policies.
Recommendations for Future Research

As a formative evaluation study, this research provides a first attempt at understanding better how the Success Coach program is perceived from the perspective of the coaches. Future research could include a program evaluation of all coaching programs sponsored by the VCCS. Expanded study of the broad coaching programs provided by the VCCS could identify program overlap, identify commonalities that may promote the use of shared resources, and identify the type of wrap around centralized services to support students in the transition from high school to college. Additionally, this overarching research could lend itself to pinpointing the linkages between the coaching programs. The identification of best practices could allow for leveraging in other VCCS coaching programs to achieve the overall objective of more college completion by students in rural college. Furthermore, a study of this type could broaden the breadth of research regarding the role of coaching within the community college sector.

Another area of future research would include a summative evaluation of all CCSCI program goals. This would occur at the close of the second funding cycle. This would permit the VCCS to view how coaches are aligning with the established outcomes. Moreover, if the VCCS has recalibrated and brought program implementation into alignment across all participating institutions, this assessment could serve as a truer baseline and be a launching pad from which a longitudinal study can then be conducted as the matter of treatment validity has been addressed. As a result, richer and stronger data regarding academic coaching in the two-year sector, more specifically rural community colleges would be obtained.
A third area for future research would include a longitudinal study that revisits the Success Coaches’ and their coaching process. In particular, the recent introduction of a VCCS coaching map could influence various aspects of program implementation by the Success Coaches on their campuses. A review over time would permit evaluation of the degree of impact that this newly revealed coaching map has on student success. By doing so, this research could increase the scope of knowledge regarding academic coaching, more specifically at the rural community college level.

A fourth recommendation for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal study of students who had a high school Career Coach and were linked with a Success Coach during their senior year as a transitional element. By focusing on this transitional component, it would permit for a greater understanding of its impact on student persistence to degree attainment.

The last recommendation for additional research would be to conduct summative evaluation over time of the CCSCI to include the voices of student participants, the faculty who have instructed them, the student services personnel who have assisted them, and the campus program administrators. This research focus would provide a more universal point of view and would lend itself to accurately depicting and identifying program strengths and challenges rather than leaving the interpretation to a single perspective. Moreover intentionality with program adjustments would be more targeted. Likewise, the research base on the two-year sector would be strengthened in particular the breadth pertaining to the rural community colleges would become more robust. As a result, the emerging academic coaching framework within higher education would be expanded, especially for rural community colleges.
Lessons Learned

In the beginning of this study, the only background information available pertaining to academic coaching stemmed from the four-year sector, and thus influenced the logic model created. The academic coaching model in place applied information on coaching from the University of South Carolina (USC). At USC in 2008-2009, the Academic Centers for Excellence (ACE) was established to support students struggling academically. It consisted of 25 graduated students who served in the capacity of an ACE coach and provided academic coaching services to 182 students. Results indicated 92% of students improved academically and increased their grade point average (GPA) (Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). The results brought about a change in USC academic policy. In 2008-2009, any first-year student whose GPA was lower than a 2.0 after the fall term would be required to meet in the spring term with an ACE coach. The outcome “yielded 40 percent fewer suspended students than predicted” (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 29). Aside from working one-on-one with students, the ACE coach presents academic success strategies to the freshman orientation classes, attends ACE training as well as bi-monthly meetings, collaborates with institutional partners, and is CRLA (College Reading and Learning Association) level 3 certified. The CRLA provides tutorial training and offers certification levels 1-3. A level three is master certification for the International Tutoring Training Program (CRLA, 2015; Robinson & Bloom, 2009).

Now at the close of this research, I realize although the model originally created functions well in the four-year sector, it is lacking and falls short to effectively meet the needs of URP who enter the educational pipeline through the community college. There
are additional activities needing to occur aside from self-assessment, goal setting, and reflection. As a result, the following modified logical model for academic coaching in the community college sector was developed and the additional elements are discussed below.

Prior to examining the additional elements to the modified model, it is essential to highlight the dualist role of the Success Coach. The Success Coach in the inputs section of the model highlights the differences in preparation of the coaches. Each coach differs based on skills, background, and training brought to the position. Whereas in the activity stage, the Success Coach role shifts to highlight how coaches interact with students via programming and the coaching function. Due to these variances, it is all the more imperative for the VCCS to establish orientation and training procedures as well as clarity pertaining to program implementation.

Beginning within the activity portion of the logic model, the study revealed three elements needing to be infused, they are: 1. Assistance with the financial aid application process; 2. A needs assessment; and 3. Campus conversations. Often rural community college students enter tertiary education with many more weights and potential barriers which cannot be overlooked, minimized, or dismissed, but rather are in need of special attention. Due to poverty, rural community college students experience greater struggle with rising cost of books and tuition (Dietz, 2011). Research indicates the critical lever financial aid factors into a students’ continual enrollment and illuminates how students most in need do not tap into this pool of resources (Eddy, 2012; Romano & Millard, 2006). Thus, the coaches’ ability to assist in this capacity further supports student retention and a students’ academic pathway (Eddy, 2012; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Romano
& Millard, 2006). Within the community college sector, specifically in the rural context, students are often working and still face the issue of poverty which leads them to face the external challenges of food deprivation and hunger (Dietz, 2011; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998; Miller & Tuttle, 2006). As a result, rural students from poverty often experience difficulty to meet the basic daily human needs of food, clothing, and shelter (Dietz, 2011; Maslow, 1970) and are in need of assistance outside of academic supports (Dietz, 2011; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Garza & Eller, 1998; Gobin et al., 2012; Murray, 2007; VCCS, 2012; Williams et al., 2007). Since an academic coach is to be a “constant resource” for students during the duration of their academic career (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 26), Success Coaches need to conduct a needs assessment with their students to determine what if any assistance is needed and be knowledgeable pertaining to non-academic resources available on campus as well as in the community (Fusch, 2012). The last element added in the activity portion is campus conversations. Often as a non-traditional student, rural community college students lack the social and personal skills needed to traverse the tertiary landscape (Green, 2006). Moreover, due to the digital divide, rural students may lack technology skills necessary to complete coursework (Cejda, 2007; Dietz, 2011). Within the Success Coach job description, collaboration with faculty and student services personnel is to occur. As these conversations ensue, it is important to bring the student into this cycle. The campus conversations entails the coach speaking with the student regarding a campus resource they are in need of being connected to, who is the contact person the coach is taking the student to meet, an overview of the conversation to come and how the student is to engage in the conversation.
As the logic model progresses to the next phase of outcomes, there are three outcomes resulting from the additional activity elements. The first outcome following assistance with applying for financial aid, is the student attaining the need financial support to continue on their academic pathway to learning, which may lead to persistence and persistence to degree attainment. The second outcome resulting from the needs assessment is non-academic resource links. These links may enhance student engagement and may give rise to increased student cultural and social capital resulting in persistence and persistence to degree attainment (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). The last outcome is campus connections. After the coach has had the campus conversation with the student, it results in the coach serving as a bridge to connect the student to the appropriate campus member who can provide the student with the needed assistance, support, or information. This campus connection may lead to increased student engagement, resulting in enhanced student cultural and social capital, leading to persistence, and persistence to degree attainment (Green, 2006; Jehangir, 2010; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

This study revealed community college students, specifically rural community college students navigate the education pipeline more uniquely than their advantage peers. Success Coaches intentionality with targeted services can provide essential supports to aid students in their academic pursuits. Therefore just as it is vital to use Success Coaches as an intervention to bolster student success, so too it is critical to employ a model that best fits the two-year sector and the students being served.
Conclusion

In the fall of 2012, the VCCS implemented the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative at nine of its smallest rural institutions. Success Coaches were employed as an intervention tool to promote student success in the area of persistence to attainment of a degree, certificate or transfer. The Chancellor sought to garner promising practices that could be scaled up across the colleges. As noted earlier in the findings, during the fall 2014 Workforce Academy, the VCCSs reported institutional outcomes centered on the first three update program goals of the initiative. The outcomes for the three updated goals were:

1. SDV completion within in the first semester.
   Six of the nine colleges exceeded their target goal;

2. Completion of developmental English course within one year.
   Three of the nine colleges exceeded their target goal;

3. Completion of developmental math course within one year.
   Four of the nine colleges exceeded their target goal (Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 2014).

Clearly, the Success Coaches are having an impact on achieving student success, but as evident from the VCCS evaluation of the goals, the outcomes are uneven across the colleges.

The colleges with the most success in meeting the three updated program goals had three common elements emerge. The first element was a higher degree of student contact. This level of student contact occurred individually as well as in group settings. For example, these coaches actively and intentionally engaged students on a regular basis.
by walking the campus daily and frequenting student common areas. It provided opportunities for impromptu conversations as well as provided students a visual reminder of the support system available.

The second element these coaches had in common, was conducting weekly workshops/activities. These weekly times of gathering sought to foster a sense of connectivity and community. It afforded opportunities for students to bond, expand their knowledge base, and build their campus network.

The last but not least important element that emerged was the significance of the coach-student rapport. These coaches made a concerted effort to cultivate a relationship with the students on their caseload. They made a point of letting students know that they care, they wanted them there, and they were more than just a number. The coach’s displayed a level of care that extended beyond providing students with supports to meet with academic success, but also non-academic supports to encourage continual enrollment. One coach summed it up by saying,

I think it’s going before [students.] It’s like, you go before them and figure out what you can obtain in terms of resources. And then, you back up and meet them halfway, and then you walk together to the end type of thing.

It is this rapport that the coaches felt greatly influenced students returning the following semester.

In particular, the two campuses that met with the greatest success described a strong institutional culture established, directed, and modeled by their campus president. I believe it was this leadership ethos, which was instrumental in effectively communicating the CCSCI to the campus community and rallying an *all hands on deck*
approach recognizing it is not the power of one, but rather the power of many operating as one which leads to student success.

The timing of this formative program evaluation allowed for an investigation at the completion of the first two-year cycle and the beginning of the newly funded second cycle. As such, this study sought to understand how the coaches went about implementing the initiative, identifying the supports and challenges, identifying the perceived supports for student success, and evaluating how those perceptions aligned with the emerging academic coaching literature.

The findings of this study revealed that an initial lack of communication and lack of direction from the VCCS has impacted how the Success Coaches implemented the CCSCI program. As a result, the coaches used individualized interpretation of their job goals, ultimately implementing aspects of the program differently on each of the campuses. On the one hand, policy implementation always has a level of local interpretation that allows for accommodation of culture and community needs (Fowler, 2013). On the other hand, high levels of individual interpretation miss opportunities to leverage best practices, lead to different types of data collected to measure goals, and move focus to areas that may not best support student success. In spite of these issues that hampered how coaches implemented the program on campus, the Success Coaches revealed that collaboration among institutional faculty, student services personnel, high school Career Coaches, and other Success Coach(es) created a fulcrum in supporting URP student success. The physical location of their offices on campus allowed for heighten interaction with students and symbolically showed areas of support for URP students. The coaches perceived that the academic plan, tutoring, SAILS, assistance with
financial aid, collaboration with faculty and student services personnel, rapport, workshops/activities, non-academic resource links, and faculty-student relations all contributed to student success. Additionally, the element of academic advising surfaced as a support identified by the coaches.

The results of this study revealed that Success Coaches are not functioning in the capacity of an academic coach based on the emerging academic coaching literature (Donner & Wheeler, 2009; IAC, 2010, 2011; ICF, 2013; Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011). The reason for this lack of alignment can be attributed to the Success Coaches not being formally trained or receiving the needed time and resources to be equipped to do their job on campus (Fowler, 2009). Yet, alignment with an academic coaching may emerge as a new coaching conversation map was distributed to all VCCS coached in the fall of 2014, and the new VCCS conversation map aligns closely to tenets of academic coaching (Robinson & Bloom, 2009; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010).

This formative evaluation concluded that although the intentions of the CCSCI has merit and promise, the initiative must recalibrate, and be recast to align more fully with the objectives of academic coaching. As well, to remain true to the work of the grant and the intended impact on the lives of the URP of students, it is necessary to follow through on the implementation of the program components on campus and to assure consistency in implementation within the individual campus contexts.

In many ways, due to the way the implementation process occurred for the CCSCI to date, the VCCS is now attempting to build the plane as they fly it. The direction of the program is being retooled given early feedback from the first cycle of the program, with a
professional development coaching conversation map now created for coaches, funding being sought for coaching certification, and centralization of data collection and analysis. To help in continued improvement, clarity of the vision and creation of a technical document which provides more strategic direction regarding the CCSCI implementation should be given to the Success Coaches. Moreover this document should include a broader understanding of the Success Coach roles, duties, and responsibilities.

The change process is not easy, but the commitment of the coaches and the early success of the program provide evidence that coaching support can bolster URP student success. This research found that the CCSCI is at the early stages of the change process—urgency is evident, a guiding committee formed, a vision established but the strategic steps are in need of being established, and in order to communicate for full buy-in communication channels must become more clear and unclogged wherein words and deeds align. By addressing these elements in stages three and four will provide the needed momentum to move the change process forward. Key to ultimate success is the follow through of the remaining elements of the change model—communication of the change goals, empower the coaches by removing informational barriers, generate short-term wins, sustain change efforts, and making change stick (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Continued attention to the change process and commitment to follow through can help assure scaled up success of the initiative on campus and can provide a model for academic coaching that can be replicated throughout the VCCS. Even with the challenges faced in the first phase of the Success Coach initiative, student gains have occurred. The outcomes of increased student success matter too much to allow these
initial challenges with the implementation of the initiative to impede future commitment to the program.

The challenges facing higher education in America today and over the next few decades, I believe community colleges are best positioned to help surmount the challenges. I think that we have a great capacity for adaptability. I think we have a great ability to be able to focus on particular challenges. I think we have a fluidity in being able to gather resources that — and plus a breadth of service.

C. T., Success Coach
The college success coach is responsible for working with a target population of college students to support and enhance their success in college. (The target population of students is students who are considered underserved as a result of meeting one or more of three criteria: race/ethnicity, Pell status, and first generation, and who have completed 14 or fewer college credits.) The college success coach will assist students in the target population in developing individualized academic plans, applying for financial aid and scholarships, identifying academic needs and linking to tutoring or other learning support resources, visiting student development course (SDV) classes, and providing follow up when risk factors such as poor attendance or low grades are evident. The college success coach will communicate with students in the target population on a regular basis and engage them in person individually and/or in small groups. College success coaches will communicate with college faculty and coordinate with student services personnel regarding students in the target population to ensure that they have access to college resources and support that will lead to completion of their academic program. College success coaches will capture appropriate data on student communications, interactions, and success strategies in order to strengthen the college’s use of college success coaches.

Requirements:
The college success coach must have knowledge and experience in the following areas:
- Strong interpersonal skills to help engage, provide support to, and motivate students
- Ability to develop individualized academic plans with students that will lead to program completion
- Knowledge of and links to financial aid and scholarship information available through the college
- Academic and career counseling skills
- Effective problem-solving skills
- Knowledge of specific needs of underserved populations in order to attain educational success
- Ability to work with students with identified risk factors for academic success
- Ability to work with college faculty and staff in support of students success
- Strong communication skills
- Proficient in use of Microsoft Office and social media
- Strong presentation and facilitation skills

A baccalaureate degree is required, with a degree in a related field, such as counseling, human resources, social services, or adult education preferred. Work experience in counseling or academic coaching is preferred. Applicants must possess a current driver’s license and the ability to provide their own transportation to meet with students in various college locations throughout the service region, as necessary to perform job responsibilities.
APPENDIX B

Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative Overview of Program Goals

In fall of 2012, the use of Success Coaches as an intervention to increase student persistence to degree/certificate attainment was employed. In an effort to achieve this overarching goal, the initiative’s funding provided for two full-time restricted college Success Coaches who were to maintain a caseload of 200 underserved students. Students were considered underserved if they met one or more of the three criteria: minority status, first generation status, Pell status, and completed 14 or fewer college credits.

As coaches caseloads were established, they were to assist students in developing individualized academic plans, applying for financial aid and scholarships, and connecting with academic and learning support resources as well as student service personnel. Additionally, coaches were to visit student development course classes (SDV), follow-up on students with poor attendance or academic performance, engage with students on a regular basis, and communicate with faculty.

To strengthen the use of Success Coaches, data on student communications, interaction, and success strategies are collected by the coaches. Additionally, each participating college set goals for the initiative’s initial two-year cycle based on the following eight outcome measures:

- % of 200 students completing SDV in first semester
- % of 200 students placed into developmental courses who complete developmental courses within one year (3 semesters)
- % of 200 students completing College-Level English and Mathematics
- % of 200 students completing at least 15 credits with a 2.5 GPA (for students with 0-5 credits)
- % of 200 students completing at least 30 credits with a 2.5 GPA (for students with 6-14 credits)
- % of 200 students earning general education certificate or career readiness certificate
- % of 200 students earning other award
- % of 200 students transferring

During the initial two-year cycle, four reporting periods were established. For the final report submitted July 2014, the VCCS systems office provided a template to indicate college strategies used by coaches, successes and challenges, performance on data measures, and a financial report detailing project expenditures. This report takes into consideration all outcome measures set forth in the initiative.

Although the data from the July 2014 period has yet to be reported out, the data for the first year of the program which examined the first three program components (completion of SDV, completion of a developmental English course, and completion of a developmental math course) has been released. The data indicated six of the nine colleges exceeded their target for SDV completion, three of the nine exceeded their target for completion of developmental English course, and four of the nine exceeded their target for completion of developmental math course. Of note, across all colleges the average score exceeded the average 2010 baseline data.

Recently, the VCCS central office revised the student success measures for the second two-year cycle. As of September 2014, the 10 measures are:
• % of students enrolled in SDV who successfully complete course (*originally 1st semester*)
• % of students completing developmental English requirements within one year (*same*)
• % of students completing developmental math requirements within one year (*same*)
• % of students completing College-Level English (*same*)
• % of students completing College-Level Mathematics (*same*)
• % of students completing at least 24 credits with a 2.5 GPA (*originally 15 and 30 credits*)
• % of students earning post-secondary, credit-based award (*originally a general education certificate, career readiness certificate, or other award*)
• % of students graduated or retained in following term (*new*)
• % of students graduated or retained in following year (*new*)
• % of students transferring to a 4 year institution (*originally transferring did not specify institutional type*)

Additionally in July 2014, the Chancellor outlined goals upon which college presidents will be evaluated. Of these goals, two are directly tied to the College Success Coach Initiative and delineate the expected outcomes. These two goals are:

• Establish and implement core elements across all VCCS coaching services
• Improve college and career transition for students in training and coaching programs
At this juncture, College Success Coaches have begun the first semester of the second funding cycle with the newly revised outcome measures set forth.
APPENDIX C

Data Collection Protocol

Document Protocol. The following steps delineate the process taken by the researcher to collect documents.

1. The researcher contacted the CCSCI administrator from the VCCS central office to request any paperwork regarding the program, any training materials used, and any preliminary reports.

2. The researcher sought clarification from the CCSCI administrator from the VCCS central office regarding any documents or materials provided.

3. The researcher contacted participants and requested any preliminary reports and any internal forms produced.

4. The researcher sought clarification from the participants regarding any documents or materials provided.

Interviews Protocol. The following steps delineate the process taken by the researcher to prepare for and to conduct Success Coaches’ interviews.

1. Apply and obtain IRB approval to conduct the field and pilot study and the program evaluation.

2. Email invitation to participate to all 18 Success Coaches.

3. As confirmation of participation was received, the Demographic Survey would be sent for coaches to complete and return via email.

4. While waiting for confirmation of participation I conducted a field and pilot of the interview questions.
5. Once the field and pilot study were completed and any needed adjustments to the interview questions were made, the participating coaches would be contacted, the survey and interview questions would be emailed, and a date and time for the interview would be set.

6. I planned on either travelling to the institution or reserving a room in the School of Education Technology Innovation Center to conduct the interviews via Skype.

7. Due to no response received from the initial invitation, the researcher drafted a white paper which was provided to the CCSCI Program Manager based in the VCCS central office.

8. The researcher and advisor met with the CCSCI Program Manager to solicit Success Coach participation. Afterwards the Program Manager sent an email to the Program Director's at each participating college to request they encourage Success Coaches participate in the study. I followed up by resending an invitation to the coaches.

9. Due to no response and discovering the coaches would be in attendance at the annual Workforce Academy, I resent the invitation and extended the opportunity to interview at the conference. I procured a room during the annual Workforce Academy whereby interviews were conducted. Two follow-up interview questions were sent via email to participants and they were permitted to respond via email or via phone conversation.

10. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and each interview was emailed to the prospective coach for member checking.
APPENDIX D

Invitation Email to Participate In Pilot Study

Dear ________________________

My name is Marcia Strange and I am a graduate student attending the College of William and Mary. I have completed my doctoral coursework and am seeking to begin working on my dissertation during the summer of 2014.

During my program, I have come to a greater understanding and respect for the community college and the significant role it plays in our nation and for underrepresented students. Moreover, like community college staff, I desire to aid students in achieving their educational pursuits. As a result, my focus of my dissertation will be on the community college sector. Specifically, I am interested in the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative.

I plan to conduct a formative evaluation through a case study design regarding the College Success Coaches Program. This study has the College of William and Mary Educational Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Prior to engaging in this evaluation, a pilot study of the interview question is needed. As a Career Coach, you empower students to make informed career and educational decisions, which slightly mirrors the role of Success Coaches. Based on your expertise in working with students on the cusp of graduating and seeking either attendance at a community college or other postsecondary programming, your participation in this field test would provide the essential review of the questions being asked in this study and the opportunity to obtain feedback and make corrections.
Your comments will remain anonymous and any identifying information linked with comments will not be reported. The estimated commitment time would be approximately 60 minutes to review the questions and dialogue in a focus group setting with other Career Coaches at an agreed upon location during the month of June.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of participating in the pilot study. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Marcia C. Strange

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.
APPENDIX E

Pilot Study Consent Form

Participant Informed Consent Form For Pilot Study Participant

College of William & Mary

The general nature of this study entitled "The Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative from the Success Coaches’ Perspective" conducted by Marcia C. Strange has been explained to me. I understand that I will be asked to participate in a pilot study to review the study’s interview questions and provide feedback in a focus group setting or in an individual setting if unable to meet collectively. My participation in this study should take a total of about 60 minutes. I understand that my responses will be confidential or that anonymity will be preserved (include appropriate term; “confidential” indicates that subjects’ identities and responses will be known to investigator but will not be divulged; “anonymity” indicates that subjects’ identities will not be known or connected to responses) and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study. I know that I may refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue participation at any time. I also understand that any grade, payment, or credit for participation will not be affected by my responses or by my exercising any of my rights. Potential risks resulting from my participation in this project have been described to me. I am aware that I may report dissatisfaction with any aspect of this experiment to the Chair of the EDIRC at phone 757-221-2358 or EDIRC-L@wm.edu. I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this project, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_________________________  __________________________
Signature                        Date

_________________________
Print Name

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.

If study subject has any questions in regard to this project, please contact the Principal Researcher directly: (Marcia C. Strange, 757-810-6839 or mcstrange@email.wm.edu).
APPENDIX F

Success Coach Interview Questions

Script of Greeting: Open with greeting and introductions. Afterwards, I will proceed with "I am now going to turn on the video and audio recorder. Prior to conducting this interview, do I have your consent to do so as well as your consent to video and audio record it. Also during the interview I will be taking notes. The recordings and my notes will permit me to better recall the information we discussed during our interview at a later time. If at any point, you want me to stop recording, taking notes, or end the interview please indicate such. Also, please feel free to provide as much or as little detail for each question or if there is a question you would like to skip you may do so. If at any time a question is unclear, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification or rewording. Lastly, in an effort to better secure confidentiality please select a pseudonym to be assigned. At this point, do you have any questions before we begin the interview?"

Questions:

1. Describe for me the goals of the program?

2. Tell me about your role as a Success Coach at your institution?

   Probes:

   a. Describe how you obtained students to participate in this program.

   b. Tell me about the transition process between the high school and the community college, in particular with the high school career coaches and what they comment on regarding the students coming to the community college.

   c. How many total students are participating at your institution?
d. How is the caseload divided between the two Success Coaches?

e. Describe the type of training or professional development you have received to increase your effectiveness as a Success Coach?

f. Describe any required training and its frequency?

g. Describe your work setting in which you provide services to students.

h. Tell me about your departments’ organizational structure.

i. Who do you report to?

j. How has this initiative been shared on your campus?

k. Tell me how you and the other Success Coach work together to communicate with faculty/support staff regarding your students’ needs?

l. What resources or supports are your students most in need of to meet with academic success?

m. Tell me what attributes and skills you feel an effective Success Coach must embody?

n. Describe for me the scope of your responsibilities outside those designated as a Success Coach.

o. How do your responsibilities alter during the summer months?

3. Tell me about your academic coaching process?

   Probes:  
   a. Tell me about a typical day.
   b. Describe the key elements in the coaching process.
   c. What role does goal setting have in this process?
d. How do you help students increase their self-awareness?

e. Describe how you help students learn the reflection process.

f. How is technology used to enhance this process?

g. What role does academic advising have in this process?

h. Describe what type, if any, assessments you use in working with students.

i. Tell me how a students' individualized academic plan is developed.

j. How do you identify students' academic needs or other support resources required?

k. How do you connect students with support services?

l. Describe how the totality of your work compliments the goals of being a Success Coach.

4. What have you found as the best supports in your role as a Success Coach?

5. What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your role as a Success Coach?
   Probe: a. How have you addressed these challenges?

6. Share what program components you feel support student persistence.
   Probe: a. Describe what activities you have conducted to maintain your student caseload.

7. What suggestions would you recommend to improve the Success Coaches' role and the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative program?
   Probes: a. How could this change to the campus structure be better
communicated to increase buy-in?

b. Describe what institutional members are needed to guide this effort?

8. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed?

Closing Statement: Thank you again for your time and willingness to share your perspective regarding the Chancellor’s College Success Initiative. Once your transcript has been processed verbatim, I will email it to you for review. Please feel free to make any changes, additions, or deletions to ensure the responses accurately represent your views and then email it back. I will then use this document for my data analysis. Again thank you, take care, and have a great day.

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.

Two follow up interview questions posed were:

1. Describe the unique strengths and success strategies you feel supported meeting the initiative’s program goals?

2. Share what challenges you feel have hindered meeting the initiative’s program goals?
APPENDIX G
Invitation Email to Participate In Field Study

Dear ____________.

My name is Marcia Strange and I am a graduate student attending the College of William and Mary. I have completed my doctoral coursework and am seeking to begin working on my dissertation during the summer of 2014.

During my program, I have come to a greater understanding and respect for the community college and the significant role it plays in our nation and for underrepresented students. Moreover, like community college staff, I desire to aid students in achieving their educational pursuits. As a result, my focus of my dissertation will be on the community college sector. Specifically, I am interested in the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative.

I plan to conduct a formative evaluation through a case study design regarding the College Success Coaches Program. This study has the College of William and Mary Educational Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Prior to engaging in this evaluation, a field study of the interview question is needed. Based on your expertise with the community college sector, your participation in this field study would provide the essential review of the questions being asked in this study and the opportunity to obtain feedback and make corrections.

Your comments will remain anonymous and any identifying information linked with comments will not be reported. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The estimated commitment time would be approximately 60
minutes to review the questions and dialogue individually at an agreed upon location
during the month of June.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of participating in the field study. I
look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Marcia C. Strange

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS
AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF
WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-
3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.
APPENDIX H

Field Study Consent Form

Participant Informed Consent Form For Field Study Participant

College of William & Mary

The general nature of this study entitled "The Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative from the Success Coaches’ Perspective" conducted by Marcia C. Strange has been explained to me. I understand that I will be asked to participate in a field study to review the study’s interview questions and provide feedback in an individual setting. My participation in this study should take a total of about 60 minutes. I understand that my responses will be confidential or that anonymity will be preserved (include appropriate term; “confidential” indicates that subjects’ identities and responses will be known to investigator but will not be divulged; “anonymity” indicates that subjects’ identities will not be known or connected to responses) and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study. I know that I may refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue participation at any time. I also understand that any grade, payment, or credit for participation will not be affected by my responses or by my exercising any of my rights. Potential risks resulting from my participation in this project have been described to me. I am aware that I may report dissatisfactions with any aspect of this experiment to the Chair of the EDIRC at phone 757-221-2358 or EDIRC-L@wm.edu. I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this project, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature

Date

Print Name

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.

If study subject has any questions in regard to this project, please contact the Principal Researcher directly: (Marcia C. Strange, 757-810-6839 or mcstrange@email.wm.edu).
APPENDIX I

Invitation Email to Participate

Dear ____________________________,

My name is Marcia Strange and I am a graduate student attending the College of William and Mary. I have completed my doctoral coursework and am seeking to begin working on my dissertation during the spring/summer of 2014.

During my program, I have come to a greater understanding and respect for the community college and the significant role it plays in our nation and for underrepresented students. Moreover, like community college staff, I desire to aid students in achieving their educational pursuits. As a result, my focus of my dissertation will be on the community college sector. Specifically, I am interested in the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative.

I plan to conduct a formative evaluation through a case study design regarding the College Success Coaches Program. This study has the College of William and Mary Educational Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and is sanctioned by the VCCS office. I would welcome your participation in this research study and the opportunity to connect with you to ask questions about your perceptions of the initiative, to hear what has worked, and to understand what challenges are evident. Your comments will remain anonymous and any identifying information linked with comments will not be reported. For example, I would state “a coach stated…” The estimated commitment time would be approximately 60-90 minute interview conducted at your institution or via Skype during the month of May/June.
Thank you in advance for your consideration of participating. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Marcia C. Strange

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.
Appendix J

IRB Approval Letter

The College of
WILLIAM & MARY
Protection of Human Subjects Committee

Cynthia A. Corbett, PHSC Administrator/Compliance Liaison
P.O. Box 8795, Williamsburg, VA 23187 757-221-3966; email: cacorbt@wm.edu

To: Marcia Strange
Subject: Human Subjects Protocol Review
Date Sent: 2014-06-06, 11:54:06

Status of protocol EDIRC-2014-05-13-9606-pddy set to active

This is to notify you on behalf of the Education Internal Review Committee (EDIRC) that protocol EDIRC-2014-05-13-9606-pddy titled The Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative: Program Evaluation for the Virginia Community College System's Initiative from the Coaches' Perspective has been EXEMPTED from formal review because it falls under the following category(ies) defined by DHHS Federal Regulations: 45CFR46.101.b.1.

Work on this protocol may begin on 2014-06-06 and must be discontinued on 2015-06-06.

Please add the following statement to the footer of all consent forms, cover letters, etc.:

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.

You are required to notify Dr. Ward, chair of the EDIRC, at 757-221-2358 (EDIRC-L@wm.edu) and Dr. Ray McCoy, Chair of the PHSC at 757-221-2783 (rwmcco@wm.edu) if any issues arise during this study.

Cynthia A. Corbett
PHSC Administrator
Associate Director of Sponsored Programs
c: Eddy, Pamela
  McCoy, Ray
  Ward, Tom
  file

242
Participant Informed Consent Form For Study Participants

College of William & Mary

The general nature of this study entitled "The Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative from the Success Coaches' Perspective" conducted by Marcia C. Strange has been explained to me. I understand that I will be asked to participate in an interview and review its transcript to ensure for accuracy. My participation in this study should take a total of about 2 hours (60 minutes for the interview and 60 minutes to review transcript). I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study. I know that I may refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue participation at any time. *Potential risks resulting from my participation in this project have been described to me.* I am aware that I may report dissatisfactions with any aspect of this experiment to the Chair of the EDIRC at phone 757-221-2358 or EDIRC-L@wm.edu. I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this project, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____________________________  _________________________
Signature                                               Date

_____________________________
Print Name

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.

If study subject has any questions in regard to this project, please contact the Principal Researcher directly: (Marcia C. Strange, 757-810-6839 or mcstrange@email.wm.edu).
APPENDIX L
Demographic Survey for Success Coach's

Name (Please Print) ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Institution: ____________________________

1. GENDER (circle one): Male Female

2. RACE/ETHNICITY (circle all that apply):
   a. Caucasian
   b. Hispanic
   c. African American
   d. Asian American
   e. Multi-racial

3. AGE (circle one):
   a. 20-29
   b. 30-39
   c. 40-49
   d. Over 50

4. HIGHEST COLLEGE DEGREE EARNED TO DATE (circle all that apply):
   a. Associate's degree
   b. Bachelor's degree
   c. Master's degree
   d. Doctoral degree

5. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN ADVISING COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS (circle one):
   a. Less than 1 year
   b. 1-5 years
   c. 6-10 years
   d. 11-15 years
   e. 16-20 years
   f. Over 20 years

6. OTHER POSITIONS HELD IN THE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SECTOR OR K-12 SECTOR (please denote the position, brief description, and the amount of years in that position)

7. Are you from the area where you are serving as a Success Coach?

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2014-06-06 AND EXPIRES ON 2015-06-06.
## APPENDIX M

### Crosswalk Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Sub-Research Question</th>
<th>Sub-Research Question</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Source(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did the Success Coaches achieve the goals outlined by the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative?</td>
<td>What supports were evident to the coaches that helped in the task of achieving goals?</td>
<td>What challenges were evident to the coaches that hindered goal achievement?</td>
<td>What elements of the Chancellor’s College Success Coach Initiative did the coaches perceive supported student success?</td>
<td>(Patton, 1987, 2002) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
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<td>Describe for me the goals of the program.</td>
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<td>(VCCS, 2012)</td>
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<td>Tell me about your role as a Success Coach at your institution.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>(Patton, 1987, 2002) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
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<td>Describe how you obtained students to participate in this program.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>How is the caseload divided between the two Success Coaches?</td>
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<td>Describe the type of training or professional development you have received to increase your effectiveness as a Success Coach.</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Describe your work setting in which you provide services to students.</td>
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<td>How has this initiative been shared on your campus?</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Tell me how you and the other Success Coach work together to communicate with faculty/support staff regarding your students' needs.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(Patton 1987, 2002) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
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<td>What resources or supports are your students most in need of to meet with academic success?</td>
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<td>What elements of the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative did the coaches perceive supported student success?</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Tell me what attributes and skills you feel an effective Success Coach must embody.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Gallwey, 2000; Tschannen-Moran &amp; Tschannen-Moran, 2010; Whitmore, 2013) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
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<td>Describe for me the scope of your responsibilities outside those designated as a Success Coach.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Success Coach Job Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do your responsibilities alter during the summer months?</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Tell me about your academic coaching process.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a typical day.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Patton 1987, 2002; Webberman, 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the key elements in this process.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Patton 1987, 2002; Webberman, 2011) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
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<td>What challenges were evident to the coaches that hindered goal achievement?</td>
<td>What elements of the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative did the coaches perceive supported student success?</td>
<td>(Donner &amp; Wheeler, 2009; IAC, 2010; ICF, 2013; NACADA, 2014; Patton 1987, 2002; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Whitmore, 2013) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What role does goal setting have in this process?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe how you help students learn the reflection process.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(Gallwey, 2000; NACADA, 2014; Patton 1987, 2002; Robinson &amp; Bloom, 2009; Webberman, 2011)</td>
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<td>(NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Patton 1987, 2002; Webberman, 2011) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is technology used to enhance this process?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kuhn, 2008; NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Webberman, 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What role does academic advising have in this process?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe what type, if any, assessments you use in working with students.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>(NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Patton 1987, 2002; Webberman, 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me how a students' individualized academic plan is developed.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>(NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Patton 1987, 2002; Webberman, 2011) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
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<td>Sub-Research Question</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Patton 1987, 2002; Webberman, 2011) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you identify students’ academic needs or other support resources required?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>(NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Patton 1987, 2002; Webberman, 2011) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you connect students with support services?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>(NACADA, 2014; Robinson &amp; Gahagan, 2010; Patton 1987, 2002; Webberman, 2011) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe how the totality of your work compliments the goals of being a Success Coach.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>(VCCS, 2012) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Sub-Research Questions</td>
<td>Sub-Research Questions</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
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<td>What elements of the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative did the coaches perceive supported student success?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe what you have found as the best supports in your role as a Success Coach.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your role as a Success Coach?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have you addressed these challenges?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share what program components you feel support student persistence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

255
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
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<td></td>
<td>(Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe what activities you have conducted to maintain your student caseload.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Bailey &amp; Alfonso, 2005; Davies, 2006; Eddy, 2012; Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What suggestions would you recommend to improve the Success Coaches' role and the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative program?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Bailey &amp; Alfonso, 2005; Davies, 2006; Eddy, 2012; Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could this change to the campus structure be better communicated to increase buy-in?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Bailey &amp; Alfonso, 2005; Davies, 2006; Eddy, 2012; Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>What elements of the Chancellor's College Success Coach Initiative did the coaches perceive supported student success?</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Bailey &amp; Alfonso, 2005; Davies, 2006; Eddy, 2012; Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe what institutional members are needed to guide this effort?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Patton 1987, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow Up Questions:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the unique strengths and success strategies you feel supported meeting the initiative's program goals.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sub-Research Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sub-Research Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Question</strong></td>
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<td>(Kotter &amp; Cohen, 2002; Patton, 1987, 2002; Williamson, 2006) and Success Coach Job Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share what challenges you feel have hindered meeting the initiative’s program goals. | X | X | | |

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APPENDIX N

Directions Table Plaque

**Directions for Signing Up for a Success Coach Interview**

- Select an interview date and time by indicating with a check mark.

- Take an interview card as a reminder of the appointment.

- Take an interview packet consisting of the consent form, demographic survey, and a copy of the interview questions.

  *Thank you in advance for participating in my study! I look forward to connecting with you soon.*

  _Marcia Strange_
APPENDIX O

Interview Sign-Up Sheet

Success Coach Interview Schedule

Tuesday, September 30, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Time</th>
<th>Number Assigned</th>
<th>Number Taken (Please indicate with a)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30 am – 10:30 am</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Room 206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am – 12:00 noon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:15 pm – 6:15 pm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Wednesday, October 1, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Time</th>
<th>Number Assigned</th>
<th>Number Taken (Please indicate with a)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30 am – 10:30 am</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Room 206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 pm – 3:00 pm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:15 pm – 6:15 pm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:45 pm – 7:45 pm</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Thursday, October 2, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Time</th>
<th>Number Assigned</th>
<th>Number Taken (Please indicate with a)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30 am – 10:30 am</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Room 206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am – 12:00 pm</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 pm – 1:30 pm</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 pm – 3:00 pm</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Interview Reminder Card Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Interview Card</th>
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</table>
| **Date:** 9/30/14

**Number:** 1  
**Time:** 9:30 am – 10:30 am  
**Location:** Room 206 | **Date:** 9/30/14

**Number:** 2  
**Time:** 11:00 am – 12:00 noon  
**Location:** Room 206 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Card</th>
<th>Interview Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Date:** 9/30/14

**Number:** 3  
**Time:** 5:15 pm – 6:15 pm  
**Location:** Room 206 | **Date:** 10/1/14

**Number:** 4  
**Time:** 9:30 am – 10:30 am  
**Location:** Room 206 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Card</th>
<th>Interview Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Date:** 10/1/14

**Number:** 5  
**Time:** 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm  
**Location:** Room 206 | **Date:** 10/1/14

**Number:** 6  
**Time:** 5:15 pm – 6:15 pm  
**Location:** Room 206 |
APPENDIX Q

Code Sheet

**Academic Coaching** - Is a collaborative relationship using conversation to help a student increase self-awareness, achieve established academic and personal goals, and maximize potential.

*Active Listening* - Openly attending to the context of the coaching conversation, noticing what is and is not being stated by the student, and clarifying for understanding.

*Assessments* - Serve as a tool for revealing a student's current academic performance levels, identifying learning styles, increasing a student's self-awareness, and provides insight for discussion, planning, and goal setting during coaching sessions.

*Coaching Space* - Is created when the coach establishes a safe attentive environment fostering trust, commitment, open communication, appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening and the usage of feedback.

*Feedback* - Is the process of helping the student increase self-awareness and the coach sharing non-evaluative observations. Evaluative feedback should be used sparingly and with caution.

*Goal setting* - Ongoing process enabling and empowering the student by focusing on designing solutions and the process to attain them through the development of an academic plan.

*Powerful Questioning* - Using positive open-ended questions focused on the student's strengths to help them express thoughts, feelings, or perspectives.
Rapport – Is established through building trust with the student whereby value and respect can be conveyed.

Reflection - The process of having the coachee to step back, make an observation of what has transpired, think through of how to improve, learn, and/or grow.

Academic Advising – Giving direction pertaining to course registration, conducts scheduling, and schedule changes.

Assistance with Financial Aid - Providing assistance with the application process.

Non-Academic Resource Link - non-academic on campus/off-campus resources to assist students.

Personal Preparedness –Being prepared for the coaching conversation with the student.

Student Caseload – Obtaining students for caseload

Tutoring Assistance – Working to provide students with academic support.

Success Coach Supports – Areas or activities supporting the Success Coach’s role.

Collaboration with faculty – Communication and work related exchanges.

Collaboration with local high school Career Coaches – Communication and work related exchanges.

Collaboration with Student Service Personnel – Communication and work related exchanges.

Collaboration with other Success Coach(es) – Communication and work related exchanges.

Data Access – Ability to obtain query reports readily.

Emerging VCCS communication - Recent occurrence of more dialogue with Central Office.
Established Coaching Parameters – Success Coach required to provide general advising without academic advising responsibilities.

Institutional Climate – Feels a sense of unity and mutual support for helping students.

Institutional Culture – Public support and promotion of initiative from campus President through communication and work related exchanges.

Location – Physical space where Success Coach office is designated and ease to connect with other campus resources.

Supervisor – Communication and work related exchanges.

Success Coach Challenges – Areas or activities hindering the Success Coach’s role.

Accepting Personal Limitations – Success Coach experiences frustration due to inability to remove students from challenging life situations.

Budgetary Restrictions – Inability to use grant funds to purchase food activities conducted.

Course Availability – Limited course sections available.

Establishing caseload – Obtaining and/or maintaining student participants.

Faculty Non-usage of SAILS – Faculty not entering student flags into the early alert system.

Lack of Cafeteria – No food service facility on the campus.

Lack of Campus Exchange – Needed campus communication not filtered to Success Coaches’.

Lack of Case Management System – No database system to enter confidential case notes.

Lack of Collegiality – Limited shared power to make decision for the betterment of students.
Lack of Communication – Responsiveness or timeliness from the VCCS program supervisor.

Lack of Direction – Unclear understanding regarding program implementation.

Lack of Institutional Climate – No sense of unity and mutual support for helping students.

Limited Professional Development/Training – Limited professional development/training provided to equip Success Coaches in their role.

Non-attentive Coaching Space – Open coaching space that does not permit for distractions to be minimized.

Role Confusion – Working in campus capacities outside the scope of their job description.

Space Limitation – Campus facilities limited program space allocation

Staffing – Not fully staffed.

Student Deficiencies – Degree of students’ academic deficiencies make it difficult for Success Coach.

Supervisor – Limited communication and work related exchanges.

Value of Coaching – Lack of understanding of coaching.

Students’ Needs – Areas or activities where students met with challenges.

Basic Needs – Difficulty in maintaining daily life needs (food, housing, utilities)

Financial Aid – Understanding the process and its management.

Internet Access – Limited due to local and or the means to use it.

Time Management – Knowing how to budget time.

Transportation – Consistent access.

Tutoring – Academic support.
**Work/Family Demands** – Limits time on campus and degree of academic participation.

**Perceived Program Strengths** – Areas or activities felt supported student success.

**Academic Advising** – Giving direction pertaining to course registration, conducts scheduling, and schedule changes.

**Academic Plan** – Document developed through goal setting/self-assessments to help students achieve academic/personal goals.

**Assistance with Financial Aid** – Providing assistance with the application process.

**Language Interpretation** – Decipher financial aid academic language and forms for students.

**Coach’s Location** – For colleges with two campuses, have a coach at each.

**Collaboration with faculty** - Communication and work related exchanges.

**Collaboration with student services personnel** - Communication and work related exchanges.

**Developmental coursework** – Student enrollment in developmental classes.

**Faculty-student relations** – Encouraging faculty-student interaction and assisting in making those connections.

**Rapport** - Is established through building trust with the student whereby value and respect can be conveyed.

**Non-Academic Resource Link** – non-academic on-campus/off-campus resources to assist students.

**SAILS** – Early alert system.

**Tutoring** – Academic support.

**Visiting the high schools** – Go meet students prior to graduation and make a connection.
**Workshops/Activities** – Information provided to students in a group setting.

**Coach's Suggestions** – Areas or activities to improve the program.

**Autonomy** – Maintain a degree due to campus differences, but have universal framework.

**Broaden Scope of Population Being Served** - Consider servicing additional students outside of the targeted student participating group.

**Clarity of Success Coach Position** – Understanding of role, duties, and responsibilities.

**Case Management System** – Database system to maintain coaches' confidential case notes.

**Clarity of Success Coach Position** – Understanding of role, duties, and responsibilities.

**College Tours** – Provide students exposure to surrounding four-year institutions.

**Community Connection** – Establish/strengthen relations with community members.

**Enhance Institutional Climate** – Increase sense of unity mutual support for helping students.

**Enhance Institutional Culture** – Increase communication and buy-in at every level.

**Fundraisers** – Seek alternative means to garner monies to pay for food so that students will attend workshops provided.

**Increased Collaboration with Success Coaches** - Provide opportunities wherein Success Coaches can come together to discuss what they are doing on their campus, can glean ideas as well as best practices, and cultivate a support system for one another.

**Knowledge Management System** – Database system where coaches can enter workshops/activities and share best practices for their campus.
Linkage with High School Career Coach and TRIO Coach – Establish/strengthen connections to provide potential student program participants with a smoother transition to the community college.

Program Branding – Establishing program identity with logo, motto, and visual representation.

Re-activate Prior Students – Consider readmitting students who were coded as a “leaver” to active student participant status.

State Phone – Provide an institutional phone to coaches to increase connectivity and access with student participants via text.

Student Model – Visual representation of the student success process.


Targeted Professional Development/Training for Success Coaches - Provide training, meetings, and professional development activities specific to the role of the Success Coaches and certification.

Targeted Workshops for Students - Develop a listing of topics for workshops that are essential for student participants and will strengthen the student-campus community connection.
APPENDIX R

VCCS Coaching Conversation Map

THE COACHING CONVERSATION MAP

The Coaching Conversation

Rapport Building
- Established at the beginning of each conversation
- Review previous contact

Active Listening
- Be totally "with" the student

Paraphrasing
- Acknowledging the student's emotion
- Clarify the message
- Summarize and organize

Feedback
- Judgment/Evaluative
- Interpretive
- Data
- Questioning/Probing

Questions for Clarification
- Open questions
- Keep to a minimum
- Complete acceptance of the message
- Avoid interrogation

Decision Making
- Discuss options with the student
- Provide supporting information for making decisions

Action Planning
- Review goals
- Review timelines
- Review alternatives for decision making
- Describe next steps

Follow-up
- Agreement to continue
- Mode of follow-up
- Timeline

Kemp, 2014, p. 7
# APPENDIX S

## Success Coaches’ Suggested Program Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Recommendations for Program Improvement</th>
<th>Suggested Remediation Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide Clarity of Success Coaches’ Job Description</td>
<td>Provide the opportunity for Coaches in a group meeting to receive clarity regarding their position and roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Success Coach Manual</td>
<td>Develop a manual outlining duties, responsibilities, and the programming processes. This manual would be made available to current and new coaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Targeted Training/Professional Development and Certification</td>
<td>Provide training, meetings, and professional development activities specific to the role of the Success Coaches and the newly created certificate option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Collaboration Opportunities with Other Success Coaches</td>
<td>Provide opportunities wherein Success Coaches can come together to discuss what they are doing on their campus, can glean ideas as well as best practices from others, and can cultivate a support system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a Knowledge Management System</td>
<td>Provide a system wherein all coaching programs would upload activities, ideas, and best practices, that could be accessible to all coaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success Coaches’ Program Recommendations</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Branding</td>
<td>Develop a logo and motto to identify the CCSCI, distinguishing it from other campus programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Reconsider when planning the budget to insert a line item to purchase food for workshops/activities conducted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a Student Model of Success</td>
<td>Establish a visual representation of the student success process to be posted in the Success Coaches’ office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Targeted Workshops for Students</td>
<td>Develop a listing of topics for workshops that are essential for student participants and that will strengthen the student-campus community connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide 4-year College Tours</td>
<td>Provide students exposure to surrounding four-year institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Clarity on the Link with High School Career Coaches &amp; TRIO Coaches</td>
<td>Provide clarity regarding the connections among the High School Career Coaches as well as the TRIO coaches to support a soft student handoff transaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a Case Management System</td>
<td>Provide a system-wide secured database system wherein coaches can upload and manage confidential student case information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success Coaches' Program Recommendations</strong></td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhance Institutional Culture and Climate</td>
<td>Consider conducting an environmental scan to determine which institutions are in need of increasing buy-in within their institutional structure for academic coaching as well as enhancing institutional climate for student success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regarding Academic Coaching at All Nine Institutions</td>
<td>Maintain Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance Local Community Connections</td>
<td>Provide a State Phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Fundraiser Opportunities</td>
<td>Since grant monies cannot be used to purchase food, seek alternative means to garner monies to pay for food so that students will attend workshops provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggested Recommendations for Program Improvement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suggested Remediating Actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-activate Prior Students</td>
<td>Consider readmitting students who were coded as a “leaver” to active student participant status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broaden the Scope of the Population Being Served</td>
<td>Consider servicing additional students outside of the targeted student participating group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


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